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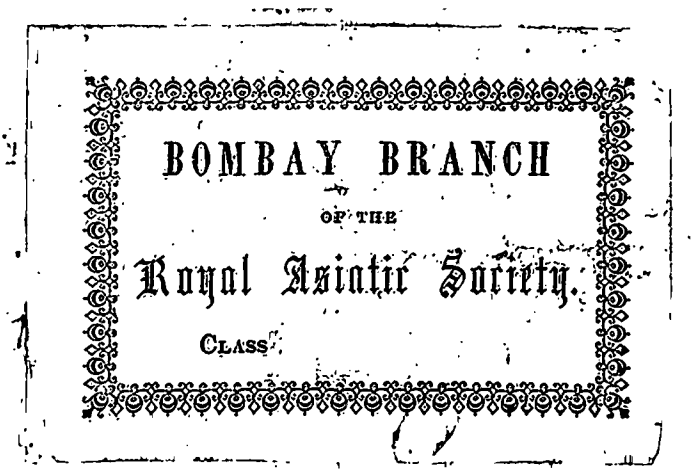

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SERMONS,

Doctrinal and Practical;

PREACHED IN

KING STREET, BROMPTON; QUEBEC,

AND FITZROY CHAPELS.

BY

THE REV. T. F. DIBDIN.

"I shall only crave leave that I may remember *Jerusalem*, and call to mind the pleasures of the temple, the order of her services, the beauty of her buildings, the sweetness of her songs, the decency of her ministrations, the assiduity and economy of her Priests and Levites, the daily sacrifice, and that eternal fire of devotion that went not out by day nor by night. These were the pleasures of our peace; and there is a remanent felicity in the very memory of those spiritual delights which we then enjoyed as antepasts of heaven, and consignations to an immortality of joys"..."And such is THE LITURGY OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND." JEREMY TAYLOR. *Collection of Offices or Forms of Prayer*, &c. 1658, 8vo.—Preface.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY JOHN M'CREERY, BLACK-HORSE-COURT,

FOR LONGMAN, HURST, REES, ORME, AND BROWN,

PATERNOSTER-ROW; AND

RODWELL AND MARTIN, BOND-STREET.

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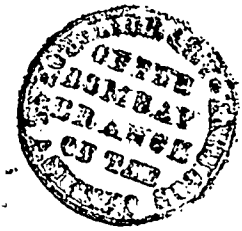

TO

THE CONGREGATIONS

OF THE CHAPELS,

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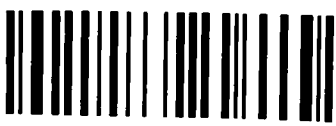
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ADVERTISEMENT.

It has been chiefly in consequence of the solicitations of many Individuals of those Congregations, to whom the present Volume is inscribed, that these Sermons now see the light. The Author is, however, abundantly sensible that a compliance with such solicitations may be considered rather as an apology *than a* justification *for submitting them to the attention of the Public; nor is he less impressed with a conviction that these Discourses are sufficiently* brief, plain, *and* unpretending. *They aspire indeed to no praise beyond that of sincerity and soundness of doctrine; and as bearing testimony of the Author's affectionate veneration for* THAT CHURCH, *in the* principles *of which he has been educated, and in the* faith *of which he hopes to* live *and to* die.

Kensington, Dec. 31, 1819.

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CORRECTIONS.

Page 93. Last line, *for* which, *read* what.
113. Line 20, dele the first 'their.'
185. —— 5, *for* of, *read* from.
368. —— *penult.* insert comma after 'salvation,'
372. —— 3, *for* who are, *read* which is.
471. —— *antepenult.* dele 'his.'

SERMON I.

II. Cor. iv. 5.

*We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord.**

The value and the importance of all professional avocations should be estimated according to the good effects resulting from them. Men naturally attach both value and importance to their respective callings in life, because they are unwilling to have it supposed that they have voluntarily or involuntarily embraced those pursuits which are futile and unproductive of good. What, my brethren, is the value, and what the importance, of *other* professional avocations, it is not necessary here to inquire:—of what nature the Profession of the Church is, can scarcely be questioned, when the Ministers of it, in the words

* First Preached September, 1807.

of my text, are to "preach CHRIST JESUS THE LORD."

Before we come to the explanation of these words—what it *is* to preach Christ Jesus the Lord—it may be necessary to premise a few remarks respecting the general character and conduct of those who preach the doctrine of CHRISTIAN REDEMPTION.

The Ministers of the Gospel, in their intercourse with the world, as has been well said by one of the most erudite of living prelates,* "naturally wish to retain the friendship of some, to gain the esteem of others, and to secure respect from all: and if by reasonable methods, such as the wiser and better part of mankind approve of, they can secure to themselves this friendship, esteem, and respect," they will assuredly find many comforts and supports in the administration of their duty; for, God knows, these things are, among the greater part of us, the principal reward which it is our lot to experience! The world may undoubtedly expect of the Ministers of the Gospel, that they should, in their intercourse with it, give and receive

* Isaac Huntingford, D. D. the present Bishop of Hereford. *Discourses on different Subjects*, 1795, 8vo.

those usual acts of courtesy and civility, which constitute in a great measure the advantages of civilized society. "But they are points in which the world *cannot* reasonably expect accommodation in the ministers of religion—such as practices inconsistent with temperance and purity; compliances incompatible with their circumstances, age, and situation; actions, which would be injurious to the character of themselves and their order; submission of their own conscience in what they know and feel to be right, to the fancies of the capricious, or the errors of the obstinate. In points of this nature, be it premised, the Ministers of the Gospel should not be required to shew accommodation to the world. It would be abject servility, and a shameful betrayal of the cause they are solemnly engaged to support, if, for the sake of momentary and ill-grounded applause, they could yield themselves to commit acts of vanity, folly, or criminality; more particularly if they could so far disgrace their sacred functions as to pervert the very end for which they were appointed Teachers of Religion."

Thus much has the world a right to expect from, and to see exemplified in, us; but, in return, my brethren, let me appeal to you

if the Ministers of the Gospel have not a consequent right to expect some little accommodation from *the world?* They have certainly good reasons to hope that you will seriously and punctually attend to their exercise of the offices of prayer, and to the elucidation of holy writ in their discourses; nay more—that you carry with you to your homes, and in your intercourse with society, a recollection of the benefits resulting from such exercise of prayer, and the discourses of this place. As long as the preachers of Christ Jesus fulfil their duties to the utmost of their power, and with the purest intentions; as long as they shall conduct themselves with propriety in all the innocent recreations or serious avocations of society; so long will they justly look for attention and respect from those, who have been edified by their instructions, and certainly not injured by their examples. That we can be indifferent to the good opinion and esteem of those whom we have been in the habit of addressing—that we should even not respect the general commendation of our fellow creatures,—it would be gross hypocrisy to avow.

Having thus stated the relative situation of those who preach, and of those to whom the

preacher's exhortations are made, I come now, in the second place, to explain to you what it *is* that the Ministers preach: namely, CHRIST JESUS THE LORD. Yes, my brethren, we have solemnly undertaken to discharge the duty of preaching evangelical truths. In the first place, these Gospel truths are of a permanent nature; the same, as St. Paul very forcibly says, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Repentance, conversion from sin, the discharge of positive duties, faith in Christ, acceptance of him as a Redeemer, and the certainty of a future life. "These were the doctrines delivered at the promulgation of the Gospel by Christ himself—doctrines, which still pervade, constitute, and particularize the Christian system of religion—doctrines which every honest and faithful minister is bound, on proper occasions, to explain and to enforce. True it may be, that of the world, some may not be disposed to part with their favorite sins; some may not approve of the solemn and strict injunctions which the Gospel lays on every sort of immorality; some may fondly entertain notions respecting God and man, virtue and religion, framed according to their own conceits, and widely different from the principles of the

Gospel: yet those who 'preach Christ Jesus the Lord,' are neither to palliate vice, nor to humor caprices; they are neither to remodel, nor to keep concealed, the doctrines of the Gospel, whatever may be the changes and turns of opinion that prevail in the world on subjects of religion." A mere display of their own abilities, a mere shew of their own ingenuity, is not the province of the Ministers of the Gospel: although much application, and serious meditation, and a considerable portion of knowledge connected with the explanation of the usages, forms, and ceremonies observable in sacred writ, be absolutely necessary for a proper comprehension of scriptural passages; yet—like the learned Apostle of the Gentiles, they are to discard all affectation of superior understanding; they are to "deliver that which they have received," "not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but, by manifestation of the truth, commending themselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." According to this rule, I humbly apprehend, must be the preaching of Ministers; and if their preaching be thus directed —if they preach not themselves, but, in the words of my text, Christ Jesus the Lord—

" not merely their own speculations, but the plain truths revealed, confirmed, and enjoined by our Saviour—then their doctrines may probably claim attention from their hearers, through reverence to HIM, in whose name and authority they are spoken."

But, it will be urged, perhaps, that all Sectarists make the same professions, and are therefore equally preachers of the Christian Religion. Now it is not for us, nor for any set of human beings, however upright or spotless they may fancy their conduct to be, to sit in severe condemnation upon the intentions and actions of different classes of society. If we disapprove, that disapproval should be expressed with mildness; and if we totally differ both in conduct and opinion, such difference is to be shewn with the proper spirit of a Christian, and not with rancour and malevolence. To God alone, the great searcher of all hearts, are our secret machinations and open conduct equally revealed, and equally accountable. He, at the final day of retributive justice, will deal out his decrees in perfect consonance with equity and mercy.

If, however, the anxious believer, or the curious observer, demand an explanation of

the proper preaching of Christ Jesus, I reply with beseeching him to estimate every thing by the good or evil *fruits* produced. That doctrine must be inculcated which CHRIST, and not his Apostles *only*, inculcated: that conduct must be the result of such doctrine, which is assimilated in some degree to the conduct of Christ. Fervent professions, and rapturous exclamations are, alone, the mere ebullitions of a discomposed state of intellect: they signify nothing, unless they are influenced and supported by an irreproachable life. We must repent of our sins; and the sincerity of that repentance can only be proved by the "leaving of our sins, and turning our hearts and souls unto God and his laws." If the wicked will "*turn from* all the sins that he hath committed, and *keep* all my statutes, and *do* that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die—" said the Almighty by the lips of his prophet Ezekiel! And what does Christ himself observe? "Not every one that *saith* unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven; but he that *doeth* the will of my Father, which is in Heaven." Can language be stronger, or precept more commanding, than this? "In Christ Jesus," says St. Paul,

"neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a *new creature.*" Again; "if any man be in Christ, he is a *new creature*:" that is, not his opinions only, but his conduct also is wholly altered;—he goes about doing good; he is meek, patient in tribulation, yet confident and undaunted in his course of action; he renders to temporal powers the things which are due to temporal powers, and unto God the things that exclusively belong to Him. He does not unrelentingly consign to damnation those who may be guilty of venial errors, but he gives hopes to the despondent and energy to the weak. He is not the first to throw the stone at a delinquent; nor does he, when prostrate in prayer, thank his Maker for not being like "adulterers, or extortioners," but, smiting upon his breast, he exclaims "God be merciful to me a sinner!"

These are among *some* of the principal signs of a Christian's conduct, and among the principal doctrines of those who preach CHRIST JESUS THE LORD. The foundation of all happiness in this, and the next world, is, a thorough repentance of sin, and a conversion unto Christ. Now, if this conversion were to depend upon certain wild notions, or enthusiastic feelings—if to say "I believe in the

efficacy of Christ's blood to wash away sin," were the only test of sincere repentance and proper conversion, then there is surely little distinction between good and evil: and the man who has uniformly led an upright and honorable life becomes directly upon a footing with him, whose life may have been uniformly bad, but who has ingenuity, or presence of mind sufficient, to make the foregoing confession! Surely, as God is the author of good, and as Christ Jesus was spotless and without guile, in thought and in deed, so surely must it follow that a Christian can be saved only by acts of purity and benevolence, accompanied by a deeply rooted belief in the merits of Christ alone to afford him everlasting salvation. The one must temper, must support, must strengthen the other:—if not, the comforts on a death-bed, of a *life* devoted to the services of God and man, are purely ideal, and have never been realised. But this supposition can form no part of the doctrine of that Minister who preaches Christ Jesus the Lord!

It is of the utmost importance that, in all creeds, and in all doctrines, the human mind be not led astray by false and fanciful notions:—least of all, upon so awful a subject

as that of attending to the preaching of Christ Jesus the Lord. Certainly, my brethren, we should in no respect fulfil our duties to God, as Ministers of the gospel, if we only read the prayers with devotion, or exhorted you with earnestness in our discourses. A higher consideration is yet behind. We must shew forth the Almighty's praise, "not only with our lips, but in our *lives*." Just so it affects those who hear the word:—their actions must correspond with their belief; otherwise the seeds of the Christian gospel have been scattered to the winds, or sown amongst brambles and thorns. In preaching the truths of our holy religion, care must be taken that these truths be explained with simplicity and sincerity:—that the minds of hearers be not sunk in hopeless despondency, nor, on the other hand, elevated with an arrogant and groundless presumption. Christ's words were plain. Christ's conduct was spotless. As our religion is not "composed of cunningly devised fables," so the purport and main object of it does not consist in merely rapturous emotions, and extravagant professions. The medium of despair and exultation is always to be preserved:—for sal-

vation, to be *attained,* must be *understood;* and, when understood, what remains but that we strive, by a correct and irreproachable course of life, to press forward to the mark, the prize of a "Christian's high calling?" We may be exhorted to preach "Christ crucified to the Gentiles" more frequently; but, the question is, are we addressing a *Gentile* or Heathenish congregation? It was necessary for St. Paul, as addressing the Gentiles, constantly to do this. Now we are born in a *Christian land,* and bred up in the Christian religion; and as we ripen in years, are, most assuredly, not only to have the duties of Christianity pointed out, but, when pointed out, to "walk in the same all the days of our lives."

It is absurd and preposterous to bring to the standard of a certain portion of enthusiastic feeling, all ideas of gospel truths, and, I had almost said, all our hopes of heaven! God Almighty is to be blessed and worshipped that he has given us reason, to distinguish us from brutes, and to enable us to *comprehend* the preaching of his Son Christ Jesus—and not that this reason is to be made instrumental to wild reverie, or to be productive of mental despair!

Those who inculcate a *different* doctrine—those who tell you that "the preaching of Christ Jesus the Lord," consists in a different method of exhortation, it is not, as I observed to you before, our province pointedly and severely to condemn; however, as lovers of Christianity, and as Ministers of the Gospel, we may lament the melancholy effects ofttimes resulting from a different method of inculcating the doctrines of our Redeemer!

Finally, my brethren, it is for you seriously and impartially to weigh in your own minds the incorrectness or correctness of the foregoing reasoning; whether it may lead you into error, or whether it may conduct you to truth. In pointing out what has appeared to me, to be the true preaching of "CHRIST JESUS THE LORD," I could have been actuated by no *other* view than that of faithfully, according to my powers, holding up to you the mirror of gospel truths, equally unobscured by fanaticism and scepticism:—beseeching you to look anxiously therein; to examine and judge for yourselves; to supply the deficiencies of this discourse, by your own more extended experience, and more accurate investigation. That day is coming,

when a judgment shall be passed upon us for our *deeds*, rather than for our *thoughts*. At the "great and terrible day of the Lord Jesus," the preaching of whom it has been the object of Ministers to practise, it will be then seen who has acted wisely—"who has done justly, who has loved mercy, and who has walked humbly with their God!" You may be saved, although the preacher may be "a cast away." If, therefore—at the great and awful consummation of all things—one thought more transporting, one sensation more exquisite than another, can possess the ministers of the gospel of Christ, it will be that of witnessing, whatever be their *own* ultimate destiny, that their exhortations have not been in vain, that their labors in Christ's vineyard have not been unproductive of immortal fruit! And if at that fearful and eventful moment which is to precede eternity—if, amidst your afflicted relatives and sorrowing friends, one sign of heartfelt satisfaction, one expression of Christian consolation, be bestowed upon those who have constantly watched over your spiritual welfare, and administered the last solemn sacramental duties of our religion—rest assured that it will afford, unto every sincere

Minister of the word, that consolation and peace, which the world, with all its pleasures and all its splendors, can never bestow!

That this may be the ultimate and happy lot both of those who preach, and of those who hear, the doctrine of Christ Jesus the Lord, God of his infinite mercy grant, &c.

SERMON II.

JAMES, i. 22.

*Be ye doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.**

THE propensity of all enlightened individuals to read or to hear maxims of utility and virtue, is a truth of which we have daily evidence in our intercourse with the world. It is sometimes really astonishing to observe with what eagerness men press forward to become acquainted with subjects both of amusement and of instruction; as if the *mere acquisition* of new ideas or new principles were the sole object worth obtaining.

Such men seem to forget that the better part of knowledge consists in *the application* of what they know to right uses and purposes; and that the proper and only return they can make for the advantages received from oral,

* November, 1806.

or written instruction, is, to shew, by a uniformly upright and virtuous conduct, that such instruction has not been thrown away; but that, like good seed falling upon cultivated ground, it has brought forth sixty and an hundred fold.

General as this observation may be, it applies, I think, to few things with greater force than to the reading and hearing of the precepts and doctrines of religion; and especially to those illustrations of scriptural truths which are delivered in places of CHRISTIAN WORSHIP.

That it is both praise-worthy and profitable for men to peruse or to listen to such scriptural truths, cannot possibly be doubted. But an important question here arises; namely, does the perusal or the hearing of such scriptural truths *alone* promote the happiness, or constitute the duty, of a moral and accountable human being? If we are gifted with reason to comprehend, with judgment to approve, and with sensibility to feel, do we properly exercise this reason, judgment, and sensibility, by reading, hearing, and understanding *only?* On the contrary, do not these qualifications suggest something else than the mere comprehension of truths? Do they not secretly, and in a language too plain to be

misunderstood, tell us that we must be *doers* and not *hearers* of the word?—and that if we *know* divine truths, our happiness will consist in the *practice* of what they inculcate—"ye *know* these things, happy are ye if ye *do* them!"

Assuredly, God Almighty hath gifted us with these mental qualifications, in order that we may apply them to the best of uses—and if man would shew a sense of gratitude towards his Heavenly Father, if he would wish to convince his Maker that he was not insensible to all the kindnesses and mercies bestowed upon him; he would, at all times, and in all places, be willing and prompt to shew the efficacy of his knowledge of divine truths, by leading a correspondent life of piety.

But to few subjects of a serious and religious nature, do these reflections more forcibly apply, than to our LITURGY and the *forms of church* service—to the prayers, and to the DISCOURSE by which those prayers are succeeded. Towards these our attention is more emphatically directed. We may occasionally, in the course of our six days' labor, read some serious and sacred book, in which the word of God is explained, and the duties of

a Christian are enforced—We may, or may not, read such a work with attention. At least it is in our power, if we think proper, to turn to a *different* object of amusement or instruction. No one is present to control our feelings, correct our habits, or punish our negligence. But it is not so when we are assembled within the HOUSE OF GOD. Some little regard to steadiness and decency of deportment is paid even by the volatile and unthinking; because the fear of man will sometimes operate, where the fear or the love of God will not. This consideration alone frequently induces the most thoughtless to be at least decorous in their conduct; and where decorum is in any degree preserved, there a rational hope may be entertained of an inclination to hear the service performed. Now, if this service be *heard* with attention, it must be *understood;* and, if understood, what, I would demand, is its meaning, and scope, and application? What duties does it enforce, and what virtues does it inculcate? Or, rather, what acts of piety, contrition, repentance, praise, thanksgiving, and gratitude, does it *not* set forth for our imitation and observance?

My brethren, in applying the words of the

Apostle St. James to your edification, I cannot affix to them so limited a meaning as to suppose they have an exclusive reference to the language *used in this place* whence I am addressing you—that they refer to the *discourse* alone, and not to the *prayers* and exhortations by which such discourse is preceded. On the contrary, if we really wish to be doers and not hearers of the word only, it would be our interest, as well as our duty, to attend closely and seriously to those simple, beautiful, and truly pious prayers and supplications, which distinguish the liturgy of this country at least equally with any *other* form of prayer that the ability of man hath yet devised!

There is a notion which very generally but unjustly prevails, that the *Discourse from the pulpit,* and not the previous *Church Service,* is to be the principal object of attention. But this opinion is palpably fallacious on the two following grounds only: 1st, do we suppose that these prayers were composed as a mere matter of *form?*—that they contain in them nothing which affects our condition, increases our faith, and promotes our spiritual welfare? Have these prayers no connexion with heavenly truths? Is the BIBLE never opened in the course of their perusal? Is the GOSPEL

never read during their performance? Are they explanatory of no doctrine as revealed in the written word of God? On the contrary, they abound in sacred matter, and a very material part of them is closely connected with scriptural truths. But yet, exclusively of this consideration, and admitting that it is perfectly a *human composition*, what sort of language, and what sort of doctrine, does this composition convey? Read those excellent writers who have treated on our liturgy; and if you cannot be convinced by the force of the liturgy itself, but are nevertheless still open to conviction, let *them* convince you of the purity and excellence of our Church Service. And it would be well, if, on the Sabbath, and on other days, we devoted only a small portion of our many unprofitable leisure hours, in perusing and meditating upon works of this nature; for let it not be supposed that our duty to God ceases when we quit this place of worship.

So much for the first ground, in refutation of the opinion we form of the insufficiency of the liturgy. On the second ground, let me ask you, supposing that these prayers do *not* contain in them one sentence immediately from the *Bible*, let me ask if they are in con-

sequence necessarily inferior to the discourse, or sermon, delivered? If you are willing to be pleased only with *human* composition, surely there can be nothing delivered in this particular place, to be put in competition with what you hear *before* you are addressed by us! None of us can be so vain and presumptuous to suppose that any, the most successful of our efforts, deserve the name of comparison with those rational, pure, pious, and truly religious effusions, which give as it were the sanction of the Deity to those prayers constituting the service of the ENGLISH CHURCH. These latter are, in truth, so happily arranged, and so happily expressed, that it is barely possible to conceive a case of human accident to which they do not apply, or of human infirmity for which they do not administer consolation. They call upon us to make a general unfeigned confession of our sins; and they implore, in consequence, the mercy of heaven to absolve us from their intolerable burden. And are these things, my brethren, not worth attending to? Can we be listless hearers of these things, and not strenuous *doers* of the virtues they inculcate? Is it possible that such appropriate exhortation, such pious entreaty, and such benevolent effusions, should

be considered as mere words of course only, and to have no sort of influence upon our lives? Do we imagine that these prayers are read only to fill the vacuum of a stated hour? It is in truth much to be feared that this impression has of late somewhat too generally obtained, or why that remissness in a proper attention to the *precise time* when the Service begins? Are we so remiss in our attendance upon other public places? Do we shew the same indifference to attend early, or the same inattention when we are seated, as we are sometimes wont to do in coming to, and conducting ourselves in, this solemn place of Christian worship and adoration?—where, "when two or three are gathered together in their Redeemer's name," Christ himself has promised to be in the midst of them, and to "fulfil their desires and petitions!"

If this indifference and inattention continue, there is too just reason to conclude that the *hearers* of the word will be abundantly more numerous than the *doers* of it: for no one, impressed with a proper sense of the meaning and tendency of our prayers, would be absent, unless from urgent necessity, when the minister pronounced his *first exhortation* or *admonition;* which is, that "if we confess

our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Another mark of our being mere hearers, and not doers of the word, is oftentimes discoverable in our inattention to the *responses*, and especially to those affixed to the psalms, litany, and commandments. If we comprehended the meaning, and felt the force of these responses, we should *heartily* join in them; and in such a manner, as to shew that we are not ashamed to let our petitions to the Deity be made known to the whole world! Are we so reserved in making known our temporal wants and wishes to our friends and acquaintance? Or do we expect them to be instinctively known, without any communication whatever? Assuredly not. If then we know our spiritual wants, (and lamentable is that man's case who supposes he has none!) should we not fearlessly and frankly, but humbly and seriously, join in offering up our petitions, our hopes, and supplications, to the throne of divine mercy?

My brethren, it is the duty of every honest pastor and minister of the word, painful as the exercise of that duty may be, to notice these failures in Christian worship, and sin-

cerely to hope that they may not become irremediable; otherwise, the hearers and not doers of the word may be as numerous as they were in the times when the Apostle wrote. Consider now, for one moment, that this admonition, on our part must be purely *disinterested:* for the good or bad consequences of attending to, or rejecting it, must lie entirely with *yourselves.* We have, speaking in a temporal point of view, no interest or profit whatever in your observance or neglect of this admonition. If you become doers of the word, the glory will be to *you,* and to *God,* and not to us. We are alone accountable to that great Being, whose ministers and ambassadors we are, for the discharge of our sacred functions; and it is for our everlasting welfare to discharge them with diligence and fidelity. To *Him,* before whose bar we must stand at the great and final day of reckoning—to this supreme and omnipotent judge must an account be rendered of all our thoughts, and of all our actions—and it will certainly not be the least consolation to bear us up in that tremendous moment of trial, to think that *you* have practised the precepts of the Gospel as they have

been expounded to you, in sincerity and truth, by your appointed Ministers.

Finally, my brethren, whether you listen to the impressive prayers of the *Liturgy*, or to the discourse of the *pulpit*, be mindful of another duty than that of merely hearing the word. Be doers of it: otherwise, in the emphatic language of the text, "you deceive your ownselves;" that is, your conduct is absolutely criminal in the eyes of God, however it may meet with your own approbation.

That it is your duty regularly to assemble to hear the word, is unquestionable: but recollect, that a higher duty remains to be performed when you have quitted this sacred place. You are to carry with you, beyond the precincts of this temple, a recollection of the duties you have heard enforced, and a determination to exemplify them in your own conduct. You are to consider the hour or hours here devoted to God, as too serious and important to be succeeded by a vain and idle round of amusement and dissipation. It is a mockery of our communion with Christ, to mingle immediately afterwards in the indiscriminate pleasures and follies of man!

As Englishmen, we owe our national safety and our national honor to a strict observance of serious and RELIGIOUS DUTIES; and when we can look with indifference upon these things, we must expect innovations and changes of the most calamitous nature. God forbid, that, in times like the present, we should be indifferent to the preservation of pure religious principles: but, as *Christians*, as anxious not to be deceived in the great object of everlasting salvation, let us, when we hear the prayers of our Church, listen to, and join in, them with reverence and devotion; for this is one of the principal methods to make us *doers*, and not merely hearers, of the word.

Lastly, Let us shew a proper sense of gratitude to our venerable and pious forefathers for the able and efficacious manner, in which, by the composition of the LITURGY, they have administered to our spiritual wants and necessities: and let us, at all times, and in all places, be ready to give thanks to our heavenly father "for all the blessings of this life: but above all, for his inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory." And let us entirely re-

sign ourselves to his service, "walking before him in holiness and righteousness all our days, through the same Jesus Christ our Lord"—to whom, with the Father and Holy Ghost, be all honor and glory.

SERMON III.

JOHN, X. 14.

*I am the good Shepherd, and know my Sheep, and am known of mine.**

AMONG the branches into which good and learned men have divided the internal evidence of the authenticity and inspiration of the New Testament, few points seem to have been more strongly and successfully urged than the extreme simplicity, power, and originality of its composition. Both in the didactic exhortations, and illustrative parables of the Gospels, there is a marked and peculiar character: a character, at once forcible and impressive, as well as new and interesting. The uncultivated as well as the refined intellect must have been delighted and edified by the delivery of such parables and maxims as are to be found in the discourses of our Saviour.

* June, 1814.

But in few discourses, my brethren, or familiar dialogues, is this characteristic trait of impressive simplicity more beautifully exhibited, than in that from which the words of my text are selected. Long before the appearance of our blessed Lord upon earth, his character had been typified by the innocence of the lamb: and it was during the midnight vigils of shepherds over their flocks, that his birth was made known. His own discourses, but more especially his own great example, kept alive the beauty and truth of these simple images and incidents: for while in conversation with his most faithful followers and beloved disciples, he takes care to impress upon them the importance and efficacy of his mission, by the most familiar yet apposite illustrations. He does not tell them that they are to adore him as a fearful and avenging deity; as a mighty and invincible monarch; as one that would lead them to every species of temporal comfort and gratification: but he describes himself as a simple SHEPHERD, faithfully vigilant over the welfare of his flock; ever ready to protect the meek, to call home the wandering, and to remunerate the affectionate; with arms and heart constantly open to embrace the whole world; with me-

dicine to heal every sickness, and food to supply every want.

Yet mark more particularly, my brethren, he describes himself as NO HIRELING: as no base bondsman, hired at a certain venal price for a few hours or days, to fill up an appointed time, and slumber over the trust committed to his charge; but as a skilful, active, and vigilant shepherd, sincerely interested in the wants, and wishes, and comforts, of every individual sheep in his fold. Observe, now, the consequence of this effectual discharge of his duty. He not only knows his sheep, but his sheep thoroughly know him, and as completely confide in him. The result is, that no robbery can be committed: no depredations carried on: no ferocious wolf dare trespass within the fold—for he fears the avenging arm of such a pastoral guardian! Thus secure in their mutual confidence—thus happy in such a full and affectionate reciprocity of sentiment—there is no narrow-minded suspicion, no anxiety, no uneasiness, on the one part, nor ground of alarm or of apprehension on the other..... We Christians are, or ought to be, THIS FOLD, as Christ himself is OUR SHEPHERD. He is indeed "the good Shepherd,

and knows his sheep, and is known of his own."

And what *other* impressive characteristic trait of this Shepherd, is deserving of being made known, and of being held up for our unqualified reverence and admiration? It is this, my brethren . . . He lays down HIS LIFE for the sheep. He not only suffers the pains of hunger, and the agonies of temptation, but he expresses himself ready to die; and has, in fact, died, and been crucified for us. Here therefore is the sum of every thing the most heroic, the most disinterested, and affectionate, that has been held forth as a model for human observance—a model, which I wish to God it was our boast to act upon, or imitate, (according to our perceptions or comprehension of it) much more perfectly than the existing state of society warrants us in concluding!

The preceding introductory remarks being illustrative of that peculiar trait of Christian simplicity, which the words of the text, in the language of our Saviour, so forcibly describe, we may proceed to enlarge the sketch of which they furnish the materials; and to fill up the whole with a degree of coloring at

once sober, chaste, and natural. What will be the result of a contemplation of such a picture, is beyond the predictive powers of its designer to determine.

If the question were put to a large congregation, of such as professed themselves to be Christians,—" will you belong to CHRIST'S FLOCK—and are you sheep within the fold of such a Shepherd?"—the answer, without one dissentient voice, would be in the affirmative. But, my brethren, suppose the examination of such sheep were deputed to an honest overseer; suppose, in other words, an able and impartial steward were commissioned to examine and report the pretensions and qualifications of *yourselves* to be admitted within Christ's fold—do you imagine that the *admission* would necessarily follow the declaration in the affirmative? This is a question which it behoves you duly to weigh the importance of: it is a question, too, which not less imperiously calls upon "the ministers and stewards of Christ's mysteries," frequently, and as forcibly as possible, to submit to the consideration of their flocks, in the discourses which they deliver from this place. Let us now see, then, what are the characteristic traits of the sheep of Christ; and in this de-

lineation let us attentively consider whether our own conduct and principles correspond with it.

In the first place, *simplicity of heart* is unqualifiedly required: no reserve, no backsliding, no insincerity; no uttering with our lips what is revolting to our conscience. We must not say we have done well, when we know we have acted ill: we must not boast of temperance and moderation, when the lusts of the eye, and the pride of human life, have been gratified almost without reserve. Away with boasts of humility, when we have exulted over our own good fortune at the expense of a fellow creature's feelings! Nor let us have the effrontery to fall upon our knees and thank God that we are "not extortioners and adulterers as other men," when we know that we have the desire to sin, but want a concealed opportunity, and tremble only at the consequences of human detection! There is nothing of christian simplicity in these, or in any of these glaring irregularities and imperfections. We must render up to God our whole heart: not keeping a part of our affections to be regulated by our intercourse with the world, and thinking that our return of gratitude is sufficiently ample, if we

restore a *part* only to him who has given us *every thing*—" by whom, and in whom, and through whom, we live, and move, and have our being." Either the Shepherd of Israel is a " good Shepherd," and deserving of the unqualified attachment of his whole flock—or he is not: now, if he be, (and upon this head I cannot suppose a single shade of difference of opinion) we must *fully* confide in him: we must put our whole strength and trust in him: we must consider him as our guardian by day, and our protector by night: without whose constant attention we should wander into the paths of vice, and without whose fatherly support our days would be few, and our bodies feeble. A member, or sheep of such a flock, thus deeply and unfeignedly impressed with the awful but truly benevolent character of his pastor, would give up to him his *whole heart*: would screen nothing, whether of good or of evil, from his knowledge: would confess that there was " no love like unto his;" and to walk in his ways and commandments, would be the first duty, and the most unalloyed pleasure, of his existence.

Having pointed out the indispensable necessity of giving up our whole hearts unto

God, of being distinguished for simplicity of character, as a fit qualification to be numbered in the fold of Christ's flock, I proceed, in the next place, to point out another and not less requisite qualification to enable us to be considered as sheep under the pastoral care of our Saviour; and that is HUMILITY: humility of heart and of mind.

Now, there are many, and too many, who are prompt enough to admit that they possess this most excellent quality; and yet, in their conduct, display a disposition quite the reverse. They know full well that, before God, they are all equally helpless and insignificant: and yet, before man, and in their daily intercourse with society, they plume themselves upon their possessions, their superiority of rank, fortune, and education; and, forsooth, consider the society of a certain class, though equally honest and moral with themselves, as beneath even their notice or observance! God grant us all protection in the great and awful day of judgment, if we come forward with these alleged qualifications of our superiority and worth! Heaven temper its decrees with mercy, if they be issued against us according to *this* exemplification of our humility! If, indeed, there be

one quality of a more corrosive nature than another; if there be one principle which cankers the human mind more quickly, and more formidably than another, it is PRIDE:—pride, by some considered as a necessary qualification in one—who is formed of the "dust of the earth," and into that dust must be speedily resolved! There is certainly a very defensible, and even meritorious quality, which is sometimes called *pride*: and this consists in being above doing vile and base things; in being above slandering one's neighbour, and magnifying venial foibles into unpardonable crimes. The pride, which teaches us to disdain the little low tricks of artifice and knavery, however successfully carried on, assumes the character, and should be called by the name, of virtue. But "the high-mindedness and proud looks" of poor perishable mortals, must, before an omniscient and all-governing providence, assume the most odious and contemptible of appearances!

No sheep of Christ's flock must carry this mark about him. Humility is the parent of good-nature, and of all the amiable virtues that move in the train of charity. We ought to, and must, shew this easily attained excellence, if we only cut away the brambles and

thorns of vanity and worldly-mindedness, which are too apt to grow thickly about our hearts, and to choak and impede the growth of more beauteous and salutary plants.

If our pride consist in a desire of being distinguished above our fellow-creatures; if, in short, we would wish to show ourselves more amiable, meek, and obedient in the flock of our heavenly Pastor, let us act mildly and moderately: let us put off all haughtiness and disdain, all malice and persecution, all rancor and unforgiveness: remembering that, in the sight of God, the soul of the poorest creature upon earth hath an equal claim to immortality with that of the wealthiest and the mightiest! So that, my brethren, it is not sumptuous fare and purple apparel that will mark us as legitimate sheep of Christ's flock; but a good, and gentle, and forgiving disposition, accompanied with simplicity or singleness of heart. Yet, another, and the last quality which I shall here notice, as necessary to entitle us to the pastoral care and attachment of the Shepherd of Israel—is, REPENTANCE: acknowledgment of errors committed, and a sincere hope, through the mercies of the same Saviour, that they may be forgiven.

There are few subjects more wildly incul-

cated, and more loosely understood, than the important subject of repentance. Every thing, as our Saviour has most forcibly as well as justly said, every thing is known by its *fruits*. If, on my bended knees, in my private orisons this evening, I pray to God to forgive me for having exhibited the vice of hypocrisy, or the sin of slander, and to-morrow betray marks of *either* in my conduct—I have not repented of the evil which beset me: or, I suppose, that the mere confession of sorrow with the lips, without the sympathy of the heart, is the sum and substance of repentance. My brethren, would you not be shocked at the delivery of such a doctrine in a place like this? Undoubtedly, if enthusiasm or prejudice had not perverted your reason, you would turn with vexation, if not with disgust, from such an exposition of scriptural doctrine! Yet, I fear, by some who profess themselves faithful shepherds of the Christian flock committed to their charge, this laxity of doctrine is even *sedulously* enforced:—as if a certain form of words, or mode of prayer, constituted what our Saviour intended by the doctrine of repentance!

Now, repentance, unless one has most blindly understood the application of what

learned and good men have advanced upon the subject, includes, not only an expression of sorrow and shame for offences or sins committed, but a determination never again to commit them:—which determination is made manifest by a *cessation* of these offences in our conduct. "Go and sin no more," said our Saviour: and he also said, "Go and sin no more, lest a *worse thing* befal thee." So that you see, my brethren, not only is the heart to be touched, and the lips are to be exercised in prayer, after the commission of evil, but a *total exemption* from this evil, in our future conduct, is to be the *criterion* of this repentance. The heinousness of sin, the depravity of our hearts, our constant liability to error, and the weakness and insufficiency of our own unassisted efforts—are topics—which, during the exercise of repentance, must be deeply fixed upon our minds; and if we feel these acutely, and in sincerity and truth, the probability is, that, through God's grace, and by his omnipotent aid, we may no more in future have to accuse ourselves of similar irregularities or enormities of conduct.

This, I humbly conceive, to be the spirit of repentance as it is explained and inculcated in holy writ: and if, with this spirit about

you, united with the simplicity and humility which have been just enjoined, you are desirous not only of entering into, but of a long continuance in, the fold of the shepherd of Israel, it is most probable that such a pastor will acknowledge you among his sheep, and be thoroughly known by you. The consequence of such an union will be, the satisfying of every want—the gratification of every wish. Like a tree that is planted by the water side, and that brings forth its fruit in due season: "your leaf shall not wither, and whatsoever you do, it shall prosper." "The Lord is your shepherd, and you can therefore lack nothing."

Thus much in illustration of the words of my text, as connected with our high relation to the God of our creation, and his only begotten son Jesus Christ our Lord. A word or two, by way of conclusion, upon a subject not irrelative to the one previously discussed; and upon which I desire to bespeak your earnest attention.

The church, which Christ himself established—the flock, which he first collected—has, since the departure of the great shepherd of Israel, not been wholly dissipated or neglected. His trust was delegated to his own

immediate successors; who were to feed his sheep, and reclaim the wandering and disobedient. Through a long and painful succession of ages, and by the vigilance and care of succeeding pastors, a Christian community not only yet exists, but exists strengthened in numbers, and fortified by civil power. The CHURCH OF ENGLAND, in particular, is not less distinguished for its honorable prosperity, than for the integrity and talent of the greater part of its members. There may be a *few* careless and self-interested shepherds; but there are *more* whose pastoral functions are fulfilled with exemplary and unremitting assiduity. Is there, I would ask, a proportionate zeal among the *flock* that now comes to be instructed in Christian truths and Christian doctrines? Do they *all* come with alacrity to slake their thirst at the pure fountain head?—or rather, is their fidelity yet attested by their adherence to legitimate pastors?

My brethren, in this place, if in any place, truth should be always spoken. There are, therefore, with pain it must be noticed, certain symptoms of backsliding and tergiversation in the present times, which, it is unfeignedly to be hoped, will not become fla-

grantly general. First, a desertion of our established temples, to witness a mode of worship in which there is more of *words* than the inculcation of *deeds*—more of flattering than of extirpating human vanities—more of specious promises than the urging of necessary performances. Secondly, there seems a wide and chilling distance between too many pastors and their flocks—as if the former were sometimes considered rather as hirelings than faithful monitors—and as if the only test of connexion between them, was, the assembling together on the Sabbath to worship their common Creator: making religion, thereby, rather to consist in certain stated forms, than in the constant recommendation and performance of a thousand winning acts of loving-kindness, benevolence, and Christian virtue: and in the demonstration of that sociality and confidence, which are among the greatest blessings that the religion of Christ enjoins. Thirdly, and growing out of the latter, there is a disposition to consider the words, delivered from this place, rather as a scholastic composition for the exercise of the *critic*, than as a scriptural exhortation for the comfort of the "desolate and oppressed"—or

for the correction of the vicious and irregular! The consequence is, and will be, that hearers become only *censors*: that the *matter* is made subordinate to the *manner:* and the head only exercised at the expense of the heart. This surely, my brethren, is not the way to represent the ancient and interesting union between a Christian flock and its shepherd or pastor. But the mischief sometimes takes a wider range—words of a discourse are not only misquoted in a public printed journal,* but are made the vehicle of sarcasm and acrimonious censure. For myself, I never will have a *personal* feeling upon the subject: but the thing justifies notice and reprobation by every honest minister of the Gospel—and unless it be counteracted, and held in contempt by the sober good sense, and Christian benevolence, of the flocks whom they address, the present Pastors of our church may

* There was a Sunday paper, some five or six years ago, of which I have forgotten the name, that used to publish strictures upon the preaching of certain Clergymen in and about the Metropolis. The present Sermon was in a great measure composed, and preached, in consequence of a malevolent attack, from the same quarter, against one of the Author's co-adjutors in one of the chapels mentioned in the title-page of this volume.

eventually have no citadel to which they can resort, to entrench themselves against the darts of such assailants!

We must go through the serious duties imposed upon us at our Ordination, with all the conscientiousness and ability with which we are endowed. Our talent, such as it is, must be exercised honestly, and to the utmost—THE CONSEQUENCES REST WITH GOD. Heaven knows, after all our exertions, there is much that may be ill done, and more that may be left undone; but on our own heads will the punishment for this dereliction of duty alight; and the upbraidings of our own consciences may, in the mean time, be considered by every affectionate member of our flock, as a sufficient condemnation, without the unprovoked asperities of those who "judge" but will not "be judged." If we lead you astray by strange doctrines—if the old and sure paths in which your ancestors walked, are sedulously kept out of your sight, and we are seeking to introduce wolves into the sheepfolds of our Redeemer—then, we ought not to stand up before you *here*.... and sure I am that we cannot stand up before you HEREAFTER!

Now to God the Father, &c.

SERMON IV.

EXODUS, XX. 8.

*Remember the Sabbath-day, to keep it holy.**

IT is an observation, as just as it is general, that the most important truths or precepts, by the frequency of their repetition, lose that force and effect which originally they seldom failed to produce. Of a similar nature is the precept or command which has just been delivered. It is a command from the highest of all authorities. It was given amidst the most awful occurrences of nature; 'midst the thunderings and lightnings on that holy mountain, upon which God himself had taken up a temporary abode: while the prostrate Israelites, in fearful suspense, awaited the issue of so tremendous a scene. If, my brethren, it were possible for us to witness, at this day, a

* September, 1805.

similar promulgation of laws, it may be taken for granted, I think, that few of us would forget such a scene, or be inclined to disregard the ordinances we might hear delivered.

And yet, we now suppose that an immense lapse of time has rendered the command less binding; that revolving centuries have made void the immutable decrees of heaven. Is it not rather surprising that, in our instructions to our children, we should lay a peculiar stress on the rigid observance of this precept, and yet, in our own conduct through life, apparently too often treat it with ridicule or contempt? This argues a strange inconsistency of behaviour. Exclusively of the insincerity which it betrays, it may subject us to the just vengeance of an offended God. On what grounds, my brethren, can we reconcile such erroneous conduct to ourselves? Where is the plea or pretext which should make us act in opposition to the wholesome doctrines which we instil into our children? If there *be* a plea, or pretext, rely upon it that we are afraid or ashamed of having it tried by the probing severity of truth and sound doctrine.

"Verily, my Sabbaths, ye shall keep, says the Lord: for it is a sign between me and

you. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel *for ever*."

Observe, my brethren, the strength and imperativeness of this sentence: the terms on which this sabbatical covenant is to be kept: not partial, fickle, and transient; but "*for ever!*" We shall presently see how scrupulously the contract has been fulfilled by the descendants of those Israelites, between whom and the Almighty so sacred a sign was instituted. In the first place, the keeping holy of the Sabbath-day, is, among the *many* excellences of our religious code, one that leads to the most substantial benefits to mankind. It forms one of the shining and indissoluble links by which a Christian community is held together. Every Sabbath, on our bended knees, we hear from the altar this solemn injunction: "Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath-day." Either these words *have* a serious import, or they have *not*; but from what has been already observed to you, of the præternatural occurrences attending the original delivery of them on Mount Sinai, they *must* have a serious import. Let us, therefore, attend to it; and while too many of our fellow-creatures may be, at this moment, indulging in direct profanation of the Almighty's pre-

cepts, let us, as Christians and penitent sinners, devote a few moments of our attention to the exposition of God's word—thus verifying the excellency of the commandment; and at least keeping, in part, "holy the Sabbath-day."

It requires but little sagacity to discover that an unbounded indulgence in worldly occupations and amusements must lead, in the end, to the worst of consequences; and that unless we had enforced, from *above*, a commandment of the preceding nature, we should never, perhaps, of our *own accord*, set apart seasons for considerations of a religious and serious tendency; so that, from morn till night, from month till month, and year to year, we should be running in one vain and idle round of folly, intemperance, and disappointment—and thus the grave would open upon us when we least expected it, and were wholly unprepared for such a catastrophe! Who is there that would not be forewarned of such an end? Who is there that would not desire to be snatched from a premature fate, with the weight of all his sins upon his head? Let us see how an observance of the Sabbath would enable us to act otherwise, and not

to rush into eternity unprepared and unrepentant.

Six days are allowed us for labor; six days (to which some add almost as many nights) are granted us wherein to perform the regular duties of our respective callings; to toil in our various situations for the benefit of our families or ourselves. And although these days be, to *some*, days of severe trial and conflict—just sufficient to enable them to earn a pittance for their numerous, craving families, yet the toil attending on them makes the return of Sabbatical rest cheering and grateful in the extreme! How these *six* days are in general spent, comes not within the scope of the present discourse to inquire; nor shall I unnecessarily seek an opportunity of describing to you the checquered and affecting scenes which too often render life a struggle with misery and vexation.

But the good man's Sabbath arrives. His heart, in union with his eyes, is elevated towards that blissful source whence his comforts flow. He breathes a prayer of gratitude and thanksgiving. He anticipates, with delight, the moment when he is to pour forth his praises to his Maker, in *that* place, where,

it is to be hoped, two or three at least are *always* gathered together in their Redeemer's name. When arrived within the holy temple of worship, his demeanor is grave, humble, and devout. He does not come to criticise the preacher's words, but to be comforted by prayer, and benefited by doctrine. He considers himself before his Almighty Creator, and while he asks for the accomplishment of every blessing "through Jesus Christ our Lord," his heart tells him the value of real unfeigned devotion. So grateful to him is the service of his Maker, that he considers not *twice* on the Sabbath to perform holy worship, a task uncongenial and insurmountable. The intermediate portions of time are devoted to meditation and reading, or to rational and appropriate converse. He reflects on the follies and sins he may have committed in the course of his six days' labor; and he purposes to lead a new life by God's grace—so that each revolving Sabbath he may become a better man, and a more zealous Christian.

Let us secondly, my brethren, consider whether, in this picture, we can discover traces of a conduct similar to our own. If we can, happy are we if we *persevere* in such

conduct. If we cannot, it is time for us to imitate it—lest that Sabbath arrive, when our Lord unexpectedly come, and demand of us how we have used the talent wherewith he hath entrusted us!

Whatever may be the sophistry of vain philosophy, whatever the sarcastic reasoning and empty declamation of human wit, it is uncontrovertibly true, that where nations have not observed the ordinances of religion—where they have wandered every man after his own lusts and fancies—there, has there been a proportionate absence of all decency, decorum, and private virtue; and the downfal of nations has been caused or accelerated by the neglect of religious duties—for where the altars of Christian worship are defiled, the sacrifice to Baal will be instituted!

But whatever may be the characteristic of *other* nations, let us in this highly favoured country, who are, in truth, distinguished for sound sense, and many private and public virtues—let us, *Christians* as well as *Britons*, adhere to the rigid and exemplary observance of the SABBATH DAY. Do not let us suppose that the *letter* only, and not the *spirit* of it, need be attended to—nor let us imagine, because our blessed Saviour hath justly said,

"the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath," that we are, in consequence, to indulge in every frivolous and unhallowed pursuit. We may rescue our cattle from danger, and we may help a fallen creature in distress; but we are not, thereby, to partake of idle and unprofitable amusements. Perhaps you will allow, that if the superior powers of the state were to issue any reasonable edict, or command, for your observance on this sacred day, that a non-compliance with it would be not only marked with singularity, but be deemed deserving of some degree of punishment? How much more reprehensible then, and amenable to punishment, is our conduct, when we thus frequently and daringly set at defiance *that* ordinance which came down from heaven—and which, in consonance with all heavenly decrees, must be founded in wisdom, in equity, and mercy!

Let us, therefore, not trifle with the Almighty by the neglect or profanation of his Sabbath; for on its due observance depends much of our present and future felicity. With what eagerness do we look forward for the return of any particular day of rejoicing in the calendar of life?—for the celebration

of any event of *temporal* advantage? Now it may be reasonably inferred, that we should shew equal alacrity and cheerfulness on the return of that day of rest, which we commemorate in gratitude to our Maker for his wonders and mercies, and which affords tranquillity to the tumultuous, and comfort to the wearied!—which arrests the arm of labor, and invites us, in unison, to pour forth our praises and thanksgiving to the great Maker of all things!—and which prepares us, by abstraction and meditation, for the entering upon those scenes where we shall be happy and for ever at rest!

Believe me, the due observance of the Sabbath is essentially necessary to our well-doing as members of civilised society, and to our hopes as Christians. All occupations and diversions, which, on a common day of the week might be deemed perhaps a *penance* to undergo, should, on the *Sabbath of the Almighty*, be suspended. By this, it is not meant to convert your sabbatical pursuits into cynical austerities or mystical raptures. Rational and social intercourse is not excluded. But let your conversation be adapted to the day; and while you are zealous to display ingenuity and readiness in

pursuits, and walks of knowledge, of a less grave nature, think it not beneath your dignity or interest to shew equal ability in understanding those historical and spiritual truths by which our religion is upheld. *If* we are anxious not to be ignorant of *worldly* affairs, it must surely be worth our while to know something of *heavenly* studies—unless we prefer the wretched gratifications of life, to the unpolluted transports of eternity! With what advantage, pleasure, and profit, might we devote even a small portion of the many hours of the Sabbath, to a perusal of such wise and pious writers as have illustrated the texts of Scripture? And the same mode of reasoning here applies—namely, that if we are so anxious to possess works of a trivial or comparatively unprofitable nature, we ought at least to shew equal anxiety to possess those which instruct us in our duties as Christians, and heirs of immortal life. Never let empty declamation, or contemptible sarcasm, lower your esteem for the possession of serious and sacred works. If you can be *ridiculed* out of the "reason of the hope that is in you," you merit not the name of a Christian, and dare not hope for the rewards of hereafter.

Only consider the subject dispassionately; and the facts and the arguments will be found to be contained within a very narrow compass. God Almighty hath created us to enjoy the comforts of this life, and, in the course of it, to prepare ourselves for the life which is to come. He has blessed us with many blessings, gifted us with many peculiar and exalted powers, and he demands, in return, an acknowledgment of all this kindness, a serious and unfeigned confession of his manifold wonders and mercies. He commands us to keep holy the Sabbath-day. Now what is there unnatural or unreasonable in this command? What is there severe or revolting in this duty? Compare it with some of those duties which we discharge for *man*—and is it not mild in the extreme? Consider, too, the eventual importance of the violation or practice of this duty; that our everlasting misery or happiness depends upon it; and surely this alone will be an irresistible incentive to perform it without delay.

In this country some of the wisest, the greatest, and the best of men, have been most eminent examples of the regularity of fulfilling SABBATH DUTIES. No power, no wealth, no rank, no avocations however

numerous, have been considered by them as a privilege of exemption; because they knew that the first, most sacred, and indispensable of *all* duties, was, the worshipping of the God who created, and the Saviour who redeemed them! Rely upon it, that, however in the vanity of youth, and variety of dissipation, we may consider this duty but as *secondary* and subordinate—a period will arrive, an hour must come, when the reflection of having done our duty towards God, will alone administer "that peace which the world cannot give."'

But while you are thus determined to build on the rock of Christianity, and zealously to imitate those exemplary instances of piety and holiness, take care, my beloved brethren, not to be carried about with diverse and strange doctrines. We are cautioned not to be agitated by every breath that disturbs the intellectual world. Keep your feelings under the guidance of reason and sound judgment. Direct your pursuits to sober and attainable ends: nor mistake every blind impulse for partial inspiration. This it is my duty particularly to enforce, because we live in times when religion assumes very many forms; and when the pure, practical precepts of our blessed Saviour are frequently

exchanged for those fanciful and chimerical notions which now assume the exclusive and imposing title of EVANGELICAL doctrine. Nothing is so apt to mislead as new and extraordinary names which perhaps are not sufficiently considered or understood. The term *evangelical*, to one who has any knowledge of the Greek language, (the word being purely Greek), signifies *well-declared*, *well-sent*, or *made known*. It may be also called *glad tidings*, or *joyful news*. St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke, and St. John, are called EVANGELISTS; because they are supposed to have been especially appointed, or inspired by heaven, to make known the glad tidings of the Gospel, or the doctrine of Christ. Why, therefore, has not the doctrine of the Church of England, as by law established, as full and strong a right to be termed *evangelical*, as that of the seceders from our forms of worship, and our notions of Gospel revelation? Whence take we our texts?—from the book of man, or the book of God? From the latter most assuredly—for the Bible, as comprehending the Old and the New Testament, we solemnly believe, at our ordination, and at all times, to be the Statute-book of heaven! We endeavour, to the best of our talents, to explain,

to illustrate, and to enforce this sacred gift of God to man; and even aver that good works *form the test* of a right faith in Christ; for he "went about doing good." No one, in our humble apprehension, can be supposed to have learnt Christ properly, who does not shew the *fruits* of his learning by a virtuous and religious life. At the latter day we shall be known by our fruits, as well as by our faith—and not simply by our ejaculations of "Lord, Lord!"

Meantime, my beloved brethren, as a means of avoiding any snare into which you may be drawn by implicitly subscribing to new forms of prayer, or new tenets of doctrine, I most earnestly and sincerely exhort you not to desert the lawful ministers of our church for every bold declaimer or uninstructed teacher. One of the methods, and chief methods, of keeping holy the Sabbath-day, is, the regularly resorting to that place of worship which has been established according to the sound laws of the realm. Nor be content with *one* cold formal resorting to it: because it is by absence, and by an appearance of indifference, that our enemies revile us, and tell us that our altars are forsaken, and our doctrine is of no avail!

God forbid, that the motives which influence me on this, or any similar subject, should be those of a personal nature!—founded upon rancor, or a want of charity towards my fellow laborers in the ministerial career. Higher views and better feelings prompt me on this occasion. And the appeal is made to you from the recollection of your forefathers; by the memory of the many eminent, and pious men, who, within the pale of our holy church, have elucidated the doctrines of our religion by their learned and successful labors, have adorned it by their exemplary lives, and sealed it with a martyr's blood. It is by the spirits of these venerable dead, that I exhort you to be true to your lawful church; and thereby mindful of your Sabbath duties,—Cleave to it in the hour of peril; aid it in the moment of assault; and, by your united efforts, bring it victorious through the storm which at any time may rise to overthrow it! He, who shall act thus, will never profane the laws of his Maker, nor bring down the vengeance of heaven; but, eventually, shall enjoy the Sabbath of everlasting rest with his Saviour and his God!

SERMON V.

PSALM CXLIV. Part of v. 15.

*"Blessed are the People who have the Lord for their God.**

IT has been the practice of all ages to shew some reverence to a superior power which they have dignified by the appellation of a Deity, or God: and one of the strongest arguments in favor of a belief of, and confidence in, a supreme and all-disposing power, is, that those barbarous nations, (few indeed in number) who profess not such belief, are involved not only in the grossest ignorance, but are distinguished for crimes and atrocities scarcely to be credited by an enlightened mind. The days of Heathenism are, however, past—the Pagan is known no more: but even in the extravagant and monstrous systems which marked the Greek and Roman æras, there

* December, 1813.

was still some deference shewn to their respective deities. The ancients had their priests and temples of worship, sufficient not only to keep in check the curious and scrutinizing eye of the vulgar, but to obtain, for the establishment of certain orders, a considerable revenue and respect. Better were *this* system, my brethren, hollow and brittle as it was, than *no* religious system at all. But although revelation had not then diffused her mild lustre—and although in occasional passages of heathen writers we meet with great beauty and sublimity of sentiment, strong and peculiarly illumined conceptions, pious precepts, and substantial moral doctrine; yet, in the great mass of society, there was a manifest and general corruption. Nor can this excite our astonishment: the people were cold spectators, rather than real partakers, of the rites and mysteries of their religion. The eye and the imagination might have been gratified; but the heart, the true and only spot upon which the altar of pure religion can be raised, was cold, callous, and untouched. Those times, (from which, however, we may derive a lesson of caution and instruction), are no more; and we, enlightened and religious Christians, exult in

our condition, and exclaim, in the rapturous language of the Psalmist, "blessed are the people who have the Lord for their God!" Let it therefore be the subject of a few minutes of our consideration, how we may continue to enjoy the protection of this Almighty power; and how, in consequence of obeying the laws and commandments which he hath set before us, we may become blessed and prosperous both as individuals and as a nation.

Various are the ways, my brethren, in which enlightened mortals like ourselves can render pure homage to our Creator for all the blessings which he hath poured down upon us. The observance of the TEN COMMANDMENTS, forming the moral code upon which a Christian is yet to act, is one of the most essential means by which to obtain and secure the protection of the Lord our God. Upon this divine code is engrafted another of equally high authority, and of an infinitely more operative nature upon Christians. I mean *that* by which our everlasting salvation is pointed out and secured to us, if we chuse rigidly to strive to retain it. "The law came by Moses, but grace and truth by JESUS CHRIST." Let us, therefore, worship

the one true God; let us keep his Sabbaths as they ought to be kept; let us never take his name in vain; let us honor our father and mother; refrain our hands from picking and stealing, our bodies from the commission of adultery and fornication; let us not kill, nor bear false witness against our neighbour, nor covet any thing that is his. This is a brief recapitulation of the Mosaic law; which, when observed by the Israelites, proved to them a blessing; when rejected, a curse.

Now, although it is better to keep *all* these laws faithfully, than to adhere to some and relax in others; yet, as we find human nature constantly going astray, leaving some things undone, and others but half performed, it may be as well to consider which of these laws, *separately* attended to, might be productive of more good than the other. However objectionable (that is to say, however it may be argued against) the following position may appear, I scruple not to affirm that the observance of the *fourth* commandment, the keeping holy of the SABBATH day, is, in the present existing state of society, of as much importance as the adherence to any one other commandment in the Decalogue: and that those nations are more likely to be blessed,

who, by a strict and cordial conformity with such commandment, evince to the whole world that they have "the Lord for their God."

And why does the observance of this commandment lead to such momentous consequences? Wherein consists its superiority over any one of the others? Because, in the first place, it teaches men to pause a little midst the bustle, either of business or of pleasure, in which they too generally live. 2. It makes them think a little too of what may be the *termination* of all their toils and concerns. It rouses them into serious thought. It tells them that they have an immortal soul, which is planted in them by Almighty God, and which *ought* to enjoy a state of happiness hereafter. 3. It brings time and eternity more closely in contact with each other. It unites God with man, and heaven with earth. This is only a summary view of the leading consequences, or ends, of a faithful attention to Sabbatical duties. Let us enter a little upon the description of the connecting links which render this chain so strong and so binding.

Rest is the companion, or, perhaps, the parent of peace. It is in the moral, as in the

physical world. Let the storms of passion prevail, and all our better feelings are torn up by the roots. Lust, wrath, revenge, rapine, and slaughter, mark the deeper atrocities of human nature: avarice, meanness, covetousness, hatred, malice, and want of charity, are the minor passions which disturb and deform our mental character. A prey to these conflicting ills, man, unless the influence of heavenly decrees touches his heart, is worse than the savage beast of the forest. Of his own accord, he knows nothing of heavenly abstraction; of seasons set apart for strict scrutiny into his own thoughts and actions; of falling down upon his knees, and worshipping the good and great God, who called him into existence from the dust of the earth, and from the same dust is to reanimate him at the latter-day. A victim, therefore, to his dark and boisterous passions, and anxious to have his heart at rest, he hears, from Sinai's mount, the awful but merciful decree—"REMEMBER the SABBATH DAY to KEEP it HOLY." A new train of ideas, by degrees, occupies his mind: he seeks the temple of his Maker: he pours out his whole soul in prayer before him: he finds no communion so sweet, no duty so pleasant and so profitable; and, by degrees,

he exclaims with the author of the words of my text, "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."

Now mark, my brethren, the result of this feeling; this regeneration, if I may so speak, in the character of a good man living even under the Mosaical dispensation. The keeping holy of the Sabbath-day pre-supposes an object to worship on that day; and what object can this possibly be, but the "LORD HIS GOD?" No graven image, no bowing down to a dull senseless Baal, can be practised by him who rests on the Sabbath-day; who diffuses the kind of rest, of which he partakes, to all around him—his relatives, his connections, and his servants. Nor can such an one pronounce the name of the Deity, whom he serves in sincerity and truth, "in vain." There must, and there will be, a thorough, determined, active, and efficient adoration of that great and merciful Being, who is called Jehovah or Lord—which adoration, as it cannot but include a punctual performance of the *three* preceding parts of the decalogue, so, I apprehend, it will in general, if not always,

lead to the strict observance of the *six* remaining parts of the same. And upon this we will now dwell somewhat.

He who honors God Almighty, the common parent of the universe, cannot treat with dishonour the father and the mother from which he sprung. How can *his* thoughts attain to peace, in the service of his Maker, who is conscious of having spurned the affectionate hands by which he has been reared from infancy to maturity? Can he expect, when he is become a parent in turn, to receive the dutiful homage from his own offspring, when he knows that he himself has acted the part of a rebellious, or hard-hearted child? Can that man acknowledge the parental goodness of the Creator, and call upon all beasts of the field and fowls of the air—upon fire and heat, and summer and winter, and dews and frosts, and nights and days, to "bless the Lord, and magnify him for ever"—who has never practised the delightful task of obedience and veneration towards his parents? It is quite impracticable. There is no admitting the supposition. "If a man hate his *father* and *mother* whom he hath seen, how can he love *God* whom he hath not seen."

Let us pursue the argument into the re-

maining branches of the decalogue. Can a *murderer* breathe a heart-soothing prayer? Can he, whose hands have been bathed in the blood of his own species, be a keeper of the Sabbath-day? How will he feel, even should he escape human detection, when he hears from the altar the emphatic denunciation—"Thou shalt do no murder?" What prayers, what atonement is to wipe away the spots which adhere to the flesh of him who has taken away man's life? Where could Cain fly from God's presence? How could he burn out, or eradicate, the mark that was fixed in his forehead? Oh, no! my brethren—he who keeps holy the Sabbath-day, will learn to subdue and modify the rough passions which are planted in human nature. He who thinks one day in the courts of his God better than a thousand spent in the abodes of folly and wickedness, will never suffer the darker passions of his constitution to get the mastership over him. That even and happy tranquillity of frame, which a steady communion with his Maker will invariably produce, will also expel from his mind all impure and unhallowed thoughts which lead to the commission of *adultery* or *fornication*. What St. Paul calls "evil concupiscence, and lust,"

will neither be named, nor thought of, by a zealous practiser of Sabbatical duties. It is so revolting to every prayer which he puts up, (to say nothing of its obvious and fatal tendency in society) it is so shocking and revolting to the pure and pious mind of a man, educated, as we now are, in *Christian principles*, that it will not, and cannot be, put in practice by him who has known the value of virtue and chastity: and no vicious and unchaste man can know the full value of pure Sabbatical worship.

In like manner, my brethren, no *robber* nor *perjured man*, nor envier *of his neighbour's property*, can be a constant and efficient observer of Sabbath duties. For where a human being considers the attendance upon his Maker as the sweetest and most sacred duty of his existence; where he is convinced how revolting it must be to the same Almighty Being to approach his altars with a seared conscience, or unclean hands; such an one cannot be a violator of the *three last* mentioned duties in the decalogue. He will "not steal; he will not bear false witness against his neighbour; nor will he covet his neighbour's house, his wife, his servant, his cattle, or *any thing* that is his."

Nations, who live individually and aggregately, according to this delineation of Sabbath duties, must be prosperous; must be blessed; for "the Lord" will not fail to be "their God."

It may be said, however, that a great deal of mischief, and even of wickedness, is practised by human beings who are seen regularly attending the worship of their Maker, within the temple appointed for the same. It may be so: but let me ask, if the *mere personal attendance,* within a place like this, constitute what is really and truly meant by the fourth commandment? Whether the Sabbath-day be not to be kept holy *without,* as well as within, these sacred walls? And whether, during the performance of worship here, our very hearts and souls are not to be thoroughly touched and abstracted, in meditation upon heavenly things? If men assemble here only to gaze about them, or to fill up a mere stated hour—if they slumber when they should be awake to their spiritual welfare—such men know nothing about the nature and advantages of Sabbatical worship! They will carry with them, to their homes, all the fretfulness and irritability, or frivolity, with which they most probably left them.

But admitting that men, who, apparently, have rigidly attended their Sabbath duties; whose demeanor has been grave, and whose attention has been serious during the performance of service—admitting that these have sometimes, nay often, violated some of the more serious commandments of the decalogue—does it not much more frequently happen—is there not a much more numerous class who have systematically abandoned *all* observance of one day in seven, and have exhibited those follies and crimes which disgrace human nature, and render the perusal of our public journals a duty most painful to a genuine philanthropist? The blasphemer, the adulterer, the robber, and murderer, were never, I believe, very constant attendants upon public worship! They have not heard those lessons, which they have so successfully exhibited in life, inculcated either at the altar or in this place. No, my brethren—it would have been well with many thousands of these destroyers of public, as well as of their own, happiness, if they had, a little more frequently and seriously, been found "door-keepers in the house of their God, instead of inhabitants within the tents of wickedness."

Seeing, therefore, that the due observance of the SABBATH-DAY is an act of Christian duty, which, if regularly and zealously performed, is greatly instrumental to a correct fulfilment of the *other* moral duties comprehended in the decalogue, it remains, in conclusion, that I exhort you, earnestly and unfeignedly, strictly to adhere to it in your own examples, and in those of your families and dependents. At this present awful and critical moment of the world,—standing, too, upon the threshold of a new year, and looking back upon the events which have marked the year just gone by—let me ask you whether we have not abundant reason, not only to shew our zeal and affection in the cause of the worship of our Maker, but in rendering thanks unto his holy name for the manifest interposition of his might in subduing the haughty, and punishing the rebellious foe? "O that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness, and declare the wonders that he doth for the children of men!"

Never surely, my beloved brethren, within the memory—not only of the present but of past ages—never have such events, shaking the very basis of society, taken place! Never such armies, such battles, such victories been

known or recorded! "If the Lord had not been with us, now may Israel say; if the Lord had not been with us, when our foes rose up suddenly against us, we had been swallowed up quickly." Yet, it has not been merely by victories in the field, (tremendous and decisive as the effects of these victories undoubtedly have been!) but, by the renovation of a spirit, teaching men the value of their own rights and laws—of their own properties secured to them by the efforts of their forefathers—that the year, which is just expiring, will be for ever marked in the HISTORY OF THE WORLD!! Oh, glorious spirit—provoked by aggression, animated by national honor, and directed to patriotic ends! Oh, blessed diffusion of generous principles, and philanthropic energies—the forerunner of sound discipline and wholesome institutions; the harbinger of sure and honorable peace!

What WE have done—what this fortunate and happy country hath done—how, through God's blessing, we have been greatly instrumental to the accomplishment of such glorious objects—it is needless for the preacher to point to you! The subject forms a topic worthy of the inspiration of the poet, and of the best efforts of the most enlightened his-

torian. It will not, I am sure, fail to be recorded; our children will point to the monuments erected to perpetuate the memories of the good and the brave; and our children's children shall speak from their very hearts, and say, "Blessed are the people who have the Lord for their God!"

Yet, my brethren, ere we depart, it cannot fail to strike you, that admonition from this quarter, calculated to keep alive, to strengthen even, and to perpetuate, that excellent and salutary spirit among Englishmen, which has produced the results just described; which has led to the formation of the most finished military character that the annals of any nation have on record; which has led to the display of forbearance, as well as bravery and skill, in the hour of victory:—it cannot, I say, fail to strike you, that admonition, even from the humble quarter from which you are now addressed, to *continue to shew* this spirit, may have a salutary rather than an unseasonable effect. For, if there be any praise, any virtue, any honour, any glory—most earnestly, most heartily I exhort you to remember, that the service of your Maker, *the observance of the Sabbath,* (and thereby of all the other duties inculcated in the de-

calogue,) is the sure foundation of individual and national pre-eminence; and that if the worship of God, and the service of man, be considered as things severed, distinct, and incompatible, we lose sight of all the great principles, and of all that glorious spirit, which has made us WHAT WE ARE!

On the contrary, impressed with a due sense of the importance of a *junction* of such great objects, let us uniformly act up to the spirit which such an impression must excite. Then may we exult in the anticipation of "swords being turned into ploughshares, and spears into pruning hooks; of our garners being full and plenteous with all manner of store; of our sheep bringing forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets; of our oxen being strong to labour; of there being no decay; no leading into captivity, no complaining in our streets. Happy are the people that are in such a case; yea, *blessed are the people who have the Lord for their God!*

SERMON VI.

EPHES. v. 14.

*Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.**

THE affectionate earnestness with which St. Paul at all times exhorts the different communities to whom his epistles are addressed, is no where perhaps more powerfully evinced than in the chapter from which my text is taken. The words of this text have, indeed, a most extensive signification; and are applicable to all sorts and conditions of men who are slumbering in the sleep of ignorance, of sin, and of death.

First, we are told to "awake out of our sleep." Secondly, we are exhorted to "arise from the dead;" because the sleep, here alluded to, is the "sleep of death." Then, in the third place, as a powerful additional in-

* December, 1809.

ducement to rise from sleep and death, we are told that "Christ shall give us light." These are the plain, simple inferences from the words of the text, and may thus be considered in a short and summary manner:—but, in a more extensive discussion, (which it will be the object of this discourse to embrace,) they appear to be at once solemn, important, and truly consoling. Let us therefore attend to their legitimate meaning, observing the order that has been just laid down.

In the first place, my brethren, every minister of the Christian religion exhorts the sinner, in the words of the text, to awake from his sleep. However soothing, however flattering to the perverted feelings of our nature we may imagine this sleep to be, rest assured that it is a repose which leads to the extinguishing of every pure and moral sentiment that can animate and sooth the bosom of man. Look abroad in the world, and see how this death-like sleep prevails. Here is the hardened sceptic; there, the sensual profligate; here, the wicked hypocrite; and, in another place, the unprincipled knave. If a disciple of Christ, clothed with the meekness of his Master, and animated by the pure love of benevolence, were to approach such cha-

racters, and tell them, that however awakened they might fancy their senses, and however clear they might suppose their perceptions to be, yet, to all the purposes of moral virtue, and to all the purposes of spiritual happiness, they were absolutely blind or asleep—what think you, my brethren, would be the general answer which such a monitor would receive? Would it not be something like that which was made to Judas, when he confessed he had betrayed innocent blood,—"What is that to *us*, see *thou* to that."

So violent, so obstinate, and so infatuated is the larger portion of mankind. That the continued indulgence of vicious habits must produce, in the end, an absolute extinction of good and honest principle, and therefore what is called by the Apostle—"sleep," cannot possibly be doubted. If time, the most precious gift of heaven next to reason, be given us to improve our talents, and to correct our vices; and if, from one year's end to another, we have done *neither*; what is this but *sleeping?* If ability to discern between good and evil produce only a rejection of the first, and an adoption of the latter—that is to say, if we loath virtue and practise vice—assuredly we are *sleeping!* If opportunities of

public worship and of private devotion be unaccountably neglected, and the same carelessness in all spiritual studies marks our conduct through succeeding years, then, most certainly, we *sleep*, and are not awake either to our temporal interest or eternal happiness. If understanding be given us to comprehend and to practise the precepts of the Gospel, and if we chuse to be lukewarm in the exercise of that understanding, what, my brethren, can we possibly call this but an infatuated *slumber!* The sinner may imagine himself awake, and in the full possession of his senses; but it is like the case of the traveller, who is precipitated into the gulf below, while his attention is absurdly occupied with other indifferent objects!

The foregoing are cases in which those who are guilty of the follies and vices, therein enumerated, are exhorted, in the energetic language of the Gospel, to "*awake from their sleep,*" and to arouse themselves from that fatal lethargy into which their souls are plunged. But if they chuse not to attend to such call—if they still persevere in their own absurd or abandoned pursuits, the consequences will be to themselves alone—on their own heads will the mischief alight: and they

cannot with justice murmur at that reward which they appear to have pertinaciously solicited.

This brings us, in the second place, to consider what is that state to which such sleep will necessarily lead. And here we are told that it is the sleep of *death;* in other words, of everlasting misery. Who, when he enters upon such a slumber, would wish to awake in a state like this? If the object of sleep be refreshment, surely that refreshment cannot be enjoyed after the slumber of sin?

The poor benighted heathen, and the uninstructed pagan, walked in their own ways and followed the lusts of their imagination; because, upon their minds, the Gospels of heaven had not shed their hallowed light. Would you suppose that, of the thousands in the pagan world who have gone down to their graves in all the wretchedness of the slumber of ignorance and sin, some few, if not a considerable number, would not have started from that slumber—if the road to which it led, or rather if the night which succeeded it, had been fully and distinctly pointed out to them?—And yet, we Christians, with the experience of upwards of eighteen centuries of the salutary effects of the Gospel, still too

frequently and infatuately chuse darkness in preference to light; sin rather than virtue; indolence than activity; and death in preference to life. Can any thing be more monstrous than such a choice, by which we blindly think to "make our calling and election sure?"

Death, at a distance, seems disarmed of his terrors. Even his certain advances are disregarded by some; but his *near approach,* who is there that does not view with an anxious mind, if not an agitated heart? Man inquires into what condition, into what regions, with what new properties, and to what ends this awful change is to lead. The reprobate character, if ever he reflect at all, has reason enough to pause here! He will then perhaps find that what he has called *life,* has been the *slumber* of ignorance and *sin:* and he recedes from the gloomy prospect before him with all the terror of a man who finds himself attacked by a powerful and resistless foe. The closing moments of such a man's career are sometimes too dreadful to think upon; for the Gospel which he has hitherto ridiculed, and the efficacy of Christ's redemption, of which he was ignorant during his *slumber of sin,* are not laid hold upon as that rock which is to

save him from the surrounding shipwreck; or as that shield which is to ward off the darts of the implacable enemy of mankind.

"Awake, therefore, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead." Bid farewell to the sins and vices that beset you: have a stedfast faith in God's mercies: shew that faith by leading a new life; and then, as the reward of such conduct, "Christ shall give thee light."

We are now therefore in the third place to shew what is meant by this light. As the morning's dawn awakes all nature, and enables man, and the beasts of the field to go, renovated by the slumber of night, to their respective occupations: as the varied tints of landscape and sky, and the cheerfulness which seems diffused over animate and inanimate things, are grateful to the contemplative mind of man—who sees, through these appearances, the active and mighty hand of God, and whose heart beats in unison with every thing he beholds:—so, my beloved brethren, and even more beautiful and refreshing than all this, is the light of the Gospel to the hitherto darkened mind of the sinner. So renovating are the promises held forth in that sacred volume which is justly

called the BOOK OF LIGHT and OF LIFE; so lovely, so serene, will be the rays of that morning which is to beam upon us in the world to come!

Who is there that would not hasten with exultation to behold this light, and to seek the promises of the Gospel, and the comforts of redemption? "Not all the wealth, you will say, which this world can afford; not all the charms which gaiety and dissipation can hold out; not all the raptures which the most elevated situation can confer, could possibly prevail upon me to lose my everlasting welfare for the indulgence of a sinful slumber!"

My brethren, these are exclamations which we all make in the moment of warmth. They are easily made; they cost nothing in the making, and unfortunately are frequently forgotten almost as soon as uttered. But it is not to *such* that Christ promises the light of revelation:—it is not on the irresolute, on the fickle, and on the merely enthusiastic, that the radiation of Gospel truths can shine with any permanent effect. It is only on the meek, on the humble, the contrite, and sincerely penitent. At all times the light of the Gospel is most cheerful and animating to a sincere believer; but surely if it be so at

one moment more than another, it is in *that* wherein we have ceased to walk after the lusts of our own hearts—wherein we have ceased to listen "to the counsel of the ungodly, to stand in the way of sinners, and to sit in the seat of the scornful."

Dreadful is the weight of vice; the burden of it is intolerable. Here our Saviour offers relief, if we stedfastly resolve to be guilty of it no more. Gloomy is the night of ignorance; here the same merciful Saviour offers to enlighten it with the rays of his Gospel, if we determine, seriously and unfeignedly, to abide in it no longer. Terrible is the death of the sinful; but equally here does the Son of God and Man importune us to escape this death, and to receive the consolations of everlasting life and happiness. Can any thing, in the whole compass of moral reasoning, or in the whole range of human action, administer to us such perfect comfort, or conduct us to such substantial bliss?

Let me, therefore, in conclusion, earnestly exhort you to apply the efficacy of the words of my text seriously to yourselves, and to all that are near and dear to you. If *You* do not require to be awaked from that sleep, or to be roused from that death, (the nature of

which has been already described) look around, and see how far it may be in your power to clothe yourselves with the authority of a Christian monitor, and to lead *others* from those wretched paths in which their souls have gone astray. Much may be done by *every* individual of a Christian community; and people most grossly deceive themselves if they imagine that every earnest exhortation to holiness can only be delivered with efficacy from that place in which the ministers of the word are duly appointed to preach the Gospel of Christ. It is in the power of you *all* to do much, one towards the other; considering how short are those days which are appointed to us in this world, and how swiftly even the most extended course is run! If we endeavoured to do this—to admonish the obstinate, to comfort the afflicted, to cheer the desponding, to awake the slumbering, and to arouse those whose conduct makes them "dead while they live"—then, my brethren, this world, instead of the hapless and vexatious scene which it too frequently presents, would wear the face of general joy, and comfort, and felicity; then the heart of no poor mourner would be left to break in helpless solitude; then the perfidy of no

worthless wretch would be seen to invade the repose, and to tear asunder the happiness of united families! But, oh—if there be *one* season more than another, in which the serious truths of this discourse should make their way to your hearts, it is at a season like *the present*,*—when we are at the close of one year, and just stepping as it were upon the threshold of another. The most volatile, at such a moment, may think it prudent to pause a little, and to ask his conscience, (if his conscience do not more imperatively ask himself) what he has done, during the year which has well nigh passed away, to entitle him to the distinction, and to the substantial rewards of a Christian? What portions of his time have been devoted to his Bible, to the practice of christian virtues, and to the indulgence of christian hopes? How his hours have been occupied, how his reason has been improved, how his heart has been mended? These are interrogatories, my brethren, which conscience, sooner or later, cannot fail to make; and they are questions, too, to which no evasive answer can be given: for we may impose upon the unsuspecting credulity of

* Preached on the last Sunday in the year 1809.

others, but we cannot play the hypocrite with *ourselves*.

Thus much for the volatile; for the frivolous; for those who seem only to move mechanically, as it were, in society, without any distinct, laudable, or rational object; and without any impulse connected with the finer feelings of our nature: possessing rather the semblance than the substance of human beings; *sleeping*, in short, when they imagine themselves *awake*—and therefore on the brink of perdition when they fancy themselves to be in the plenitude of influence and power.

For the decidedly profligate and vicious, a moment like the present, which *ought* to be devoted to serious reflection and dispassionate inquiry, cannot fail to be productive of alarming conclusions—or, let us hope, penitent confessions for past irregularities, and earnest protestations before God of amendment!

But let me, in the last place, address the greater portion of you here assembled, as serious, well-disposed, and professed Christians in DEED as well as in *name*. Can you think upon the year, which, ere I shall again address you, will have passed away, without that degree of sober and serious reflection, which

balances even the joy upon the anticipation of the year which is to follow? Do not all domestic annals, however smoothly the current of life may have flown, furnish *something*—some tender and touching memorial, that life is but a dream, and eternity only worth the possession?

My brethren, all things are well and fitly ordained by the great and good Providence under which we live, and move, and have our being. Pleasure and pain are so nicely balanced, and so wisely proportioned, that we are neither to be intoxicated by the one nor overwhelmed by the other. The parting and the coming seasons have each a fit object for man's observance and correction. The gloom of winter is enlivened by the reflection that spring and summer shall succeed; the sleep of death is rendered composed, when we think, before we fall into such a slumber, that we are to awake in eternity:—an eternity of undiminished felicity to those who die "in the faith and fear of Christ."

From this slumber let no man think that he can escape. We see approaches made to it every year and even every month that passes away. The faded aspects and altered

forms of those whom we have cherished from our infancy, or even of those who have grown up with ourselves, abundantly testify that nothing can secure us from the casualties of mortality. If we live to *die*, we die also for *immortal life*. "Awake, therefore, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

SERMON VII.

LUKE xxii. Part of v. 19.

This do in remembrance of me.

Such were the solemn words of the Saviour of mankind when he partook of the last repast with his disciples. The feast of the paschal lamb was in future to be superseded by the adoption of his own; which, in all succeeding ages, has been called "The SACRAMENT, or SUPPER OF THE LORD." It is to this sacred festival, to an explanation not only of this particular institution, but of the principal part of our *church service* relating to it, that I shall devote the discourse of this solemn anniversary of the crucifixion of the Saviour of the world.*

The Exhortation, which more particularly belongs to, or rather indeed opens, this so-

* Preached on Good Friday, 1810.

lemn part of our church service, calls upon us earnestly and seriously to examine ourselves before we presume to eat of the sacramental bread, or drink of the sacramental cup. Now this examination is not, or ought not to be, hasty and momentary: it ought to have *preceded* our entrance into a place of worship; for no man should *suddenly* resolve upon the participation of the Sacrament, unconscious of the nature of the examination which it requires. What, you may be disposed to say, is this examination? What are the objects which it holds forth, and what are the difficulties attending the investigation of them? The objects are simply these. Do you repent of your sins? Have you "a stedfast faith in Christ Jesus? and are you resolved to amend your lives, and be in perfect charity with all men?" Now these questions are most plain, explicit, and forcible. There is no mystery about them; they require no depth of learning, nor acuteness of apprehension: the simplest mortal amongst us knows whether he *is*, or is *not*, heartily sorry for the crimes, follies, and misdeeds which he may have committed: whether he really and truly believe in the efficacy of Christ's redemption, and have faith in such efficacy? And, lastly, whether

he be seriously determined to amend his manner of living, and to let his heart beat in perfect unison and charity with all men. These are questions of self-examination to which we can all say *Yea*, or *Nay*. Let us not, therefore, drive them away by remarking that they are difficult, and require a great length of time, and acuteness of deduction, in their solution.

In the next place, if we are resolved to repent of our sins, to amend our lives, and live in charity with our fellow-creatures, we shall "be meet partakers of the holy mysteries of the Sacrament:" that is, we are in some manner worthy of becoming humble guests at the table of the Lord. But, let us remember the opposite side of the question; the contrary result: if we do *not* chuse to enter into this examination, nor put in practice either of the foregoing demands or solicitations—if we will *not* repent of our sins, nor have faith in Christ, nor resolve to amend our lives, and under these impressions and determinations, approach the sacred table, then we are told that we shall eat and drink our own "*damnation*," or *condemnation*; for the former word, which is purely foreign, here means nothing but the sense of which is

usually conveyed by the *latter*. This clause, my brethren, has startled many; but what is really the sense and spirit of it? Certain rules or propositions are laid down—the simplicity and obvious meaning of which, as well as the necessity of making them, no one can be rash enough to deny—certain rules of examination being laid down, we are exhorted to attend closely to them: but if we chuse to pay no attention whatever to the exhortation, or to the nature of the examination itself, then, most assuredly, we approach the table rather as *Heathens* than as *Christians;* and consequently "eat and drink our own condemnation;" that is, we are pertinaciously and obstinately committing an act for which God Almighty will assuredly *condemn* us. All this, my brethren, seems most rational and as a matter of course: and as long as men, who are quite indifferent about religious creeds, or are fond of carping at supposed inconsistencies, keep back from the holy festival of our Lord's supper, on *this ground alone*, it will not be deemed indecorous to aver, that such withdrawing from the sacrament is most reprehensible, and unsafe to the welfare of a Christian's soul. If we chuse, under the covert of some particular plea, or some doubt-

ful phraseology, to absent ourselves from *this* ceremony, we may, on similar grounds, absent ourselves from every *other* ceremony; and the religion of Christ, as inculcated by the Church of England, may, in the end, become a religion as indifferent to us as that of a Pagan country.

I have dwelt the longer on this introductory prayer, not only because it seems most justly and persuasively to unfold the particular objects of the Sacrament, but because it has, even with conscientious and amiable characters, had a repulsive effect, which certainly ought in no wise to have sprung out of it: and most earnestly do I exhort and intreat every such conscientious person, to give it a careful and serious reperusal; and to let it (as it ought to) have a serious, soothing, and salutary effect upon his mind.

We may now take a brief view of the remaining part of the service. The congregation having resolved to repent of their sins, to have a faith in Christ, and to lead new lives, the minister, in the most devout and impressive language, exhorts them to "draw near with faith, and to take this holy Sacrament to their comfort." In order that such comfort may ensue from their participation

of it, a general confession of their follies and sins is made; and the minister afterwards rises, and pronounces before the people an absolution, which is put up to the throne of mercy, under the hope that it will be accepted "through Jesus Christ our Lord."

This done, the service is more particularly entered upon. Our minds being strengthened and cheered by this previous preparation and absolution, we proceed quickly towards partaking of the bread and wine. A few sentences from Scripture, (wherein the mercies, and loving kindnesses, and expiatory nature of Christ's office are unfolded,) precede that most solemn and impressive prayer, wherein, prostrate upon our knees, and with hearts and hands lifted up to the gracious source of all our comforts and happiness—we acknowledge that "we do not presume to approach Christ's table trusting in our *own* righteousness, but in *his* manifold and great mercies: that we are not worthy even to pick up the crumbs which fall from his table: but that *he* is the same Lord whose property is always to have *mercy*." Hoping that our sinful bodies "may be made clean by his body, and our souls washed by his blood," we rise, and listen attentively to the minister; who, in

a most interesting prayer, describes the origin and application of the feast of which we are about to partake—how the bread is typical of the body; the wine, of the blood of Christ; and under what solemn, and affecting, and trying circumstances the Institution was founded. In all this the utmost simplicity, and the most lucid order, prevails: no unmeaning words are pronounced, nor are any idle forms witnessed. You see clearly how the festival was instituted; so that, just before you come to partake of it—before your knees bend at the altar, you feel impressed that this simple and cordial repast is calculated to awaken in you the most fervent gratitude, and the most invincible affection towards so good, so great, so merciful a Redeemer!

As you approach the table, imagine that you see, in the symbols upon the altar, and in the solemn mode in which the repast is about to be administered, the ancient primitive scene which gave rise to it: and in truth, my brethren, it requires no very great or painful stretch of imagination for a good Christian to have these things in contemplation. When the bread and the wine are administered, consider under what feelings and circumstances

they were originally given by the Saviour of the world to his disciples. They were all sitting at supper with him. The hour was midnight; and each was anticipating the moment that was to take him away from them for ever. In consequence they were under the deepest affliction. Our Saviour, who generally took occasion to speak from things and circumstances immediately before the eyes of those whom he addressed, (whether alluding to the splendor of raiment from the lilies of the field, or to personal liberty from the birds flying in the air) seized the opportunity of the bread and wine being before him, to make a most impressive appeal to his beloved disciples, relating to his own fate; and to a festival which they were hereafter to celebrate in remembrance of himself.

The paschal lamb having been offered, he then simply and obviously, as it were, took the bread which was lying on the table, and "gave thanks, and brake it"—saying, this is typical of my body, which to-morrow is to be broken upon the cross for you. This do, when I shall be no more upon earth, "in remembrance of me." We may well conceive that his disciples, with aching hearts and overflowing eyes, did as he desired them; after

which, taking in like manner the cup, he tells them to drink thereof; for, says he, "This cup is the New Testament, in my blood, which to-morrow will also be shed upon the cross for you." Now only consider, my brethren, how simple, touching, and appropriate was every thing here recorded—not calculated to shake the disciples with fearful apprehensions, or to overwhelm them with deep despair! Just so it should operate with us. When the bread is administered, we should receive it with a serenity, a composure of feeling, mingled with the deepest gratitude, and a fixed determination to "feed upon our Saviour in our hearts, by faith, with thanksgiving." Also, when the cup is administered, we must drink thereof with corresponding emotions; recollecting, that both the one and the other is given us to "preserve our bodies and souls unto everlasting life."

There is no need, therefore, for highly wrought and impassioned feelings on our part; for enthusiastic emotions and energies, as some sincere but too ardent Christians have imagined: but, as before observed, rational and settled thoughts, calm and fixed hopes, pure and unwavering resolutions!—

calling to mind the peculiar character of the Founder of the sacred festival—in whom were united majesty and repose, without violence of emotion on the one hand, and coldness of sentiment on the other.

Our meditations however are here assisted, and our faith and good resolutions strengthened, by those devout compositions, which, as *Companions to the Altar*, we carry with us to the table. And let us, my brethren, throughout the whole ceremony not fail to pay a most serious attention to these excellent works; which, much better than any thing in my power to bring forward, explain to you the whole order and beautiful propriety of this sacred Institution.

Having each received the bread and wine, we retire to our respective seats; impressed, I would always hope, with seriousness, but not with despondency; and thanking our heavenly father for this peculiar trait of his mercy and kindness towards the children of men. Then follows, from respect to the sacred Founder of the festival, the prayer which he himself vouchsafed to teach us: after which ensues a most devout form of prayer, in which we avow, in the presence of God Almighty, that we "offer and present him,

ourselves, our souls, and bodies, as a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice!—beseeching the same Almighty power to accept this sacrifice, as a duty and service which we are most solemnly bound to perform." Now consider how serious, how awful, and to the good Christian, how consoling is such a sacrifice. Compare it with the painful and pernicious sacrifices which we are constantly offering up to the different idols of the world; to the Baals, among whose slaves we would sometimes rather enlist ourselves! A Christian, in word and in deed, comes forward to do this sacrifice with cheerfulness, and with gratitude; and tearing from his breast all the evil passions which have agitated and marred it, he kneels down, stript of such offences, to beg of his Creator to accept this sacrifice, according to the sincere and devout manner in which it is offered up!

With such a spirit he enters into the performance of the short remaining part of the service: "he praises, he blesses, he worships, he glorifies, he gives thanks to God the Father Almighty," for all his mercies, all his constant acts of benevolence, support, wisdom, and loving kindnesses, which fill all

creation, and has been the theme of admiring angels and attendant spirits, ever since the stars were created and sang together for joy. Into the bosom of such a communicant, "the peace of God" will not fail to be infused; and the "blessing of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, will be with them, and abide always."

Thus, my brethren, somewhat too cursorily perhaps, have I submitted to your present earnest attention, and future serious consideration, an outline of the principal objects embraced in the holy communion, as by the CHURCH OF ENGLAND established. The remaining part of this discourse shall be devoted to the discussion of a few practical points, which, by God's blessing, may tend to your edification and comfort.

Having, from the tenor of the foregoing observations, shewn what is the nature, what the advantages and consolations attending a devout participation of the Lord's supper, it shall now be my object to ask, why the participation of it is not more *general* and more *cordial?* Why men fly from the duties of their religion, in neglecting this sacred institution, and yet most punctually, most gladly

partake of those gratifications connected with the "lusts of the eye, and the pride of human life?"

Two grounds for non-attendance are usually urged; and, perhaps, to one or the other of these, all objections may be reduced. The *first* ground is, that men care nothing about it. They are quite indifferent as to its present and future advantages. It is astonishing and most melancholy to think, how daringly observations are made and acted upon, with the most consummate confidence, without being in the least understood. A man shall express his total indifference concerning this sacred institution, who knows nothing about its origin, its meaning, and its tendency: he shall be daily and hourly incurring the wrath of heaven; soothing himself in his own conceits, and reposing upon the pillow of his own ignorance and temerity! If any human creature of such a description should be here present, most anxiously, most zealously, do I exhort and entreat him to reconsider the state of his soul's welfare, to retread his steps, to cast from him all arrogance and indifference about God's word; and, if he have any belief in the revelation of Christ Jesus, so, assuredly, to look with reverence

and with gratitude upon that sacred institution, which we are commanded to commemorate in remembrance of his life and death!

In the last place—and to consider the *remaining* and very opposite objection. We find it is, that some people think they are not absolutely *worthy* to partake of this Sacrament. Now the nature, the object, and the probable tendency of it have been before explained. We serve not an austere master: he does not command us to approach him as *perfect creatures*—He only says, "will you repent of your sins, have a lively faith in me, and amend your lives?" These are the terms of the invitation to Christ's table. They are not, "are you *rich*, are you *great*, and, what the world calls, *respectable?*" But, have you an honest and charitable heart, and are you resolved to partake of my simple banquet with a wish and hope that it may substantially benefit you? Nothing more is meant; nothing beyond this inference can be fairly drawn. Away then with every timorous and unsubstantial plea. The Christian soldier is not to be a coward in the ranks of the Captain of his salvation. If he love his commander, if he respect the name of Jesus, if he feel penetrated with gratitude, if

he know what is the depth and height of the affection of the master whom he serves, he will crowd round his banner;—he will fall down at his footstool—and perform, with punctuality and heartfelt devotion, every ceremony which such a divine character has established for the comfort and everlasting welfare of his soul.

SERMON VIII.

II. PETER, i. 19.

*We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place; until the day-dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts.**

WHOEVER has been accustomed attentively to survey human nature in its active or passive state, will have reason enough to complain of its caprices and irregularities. So fickle, and so contrary are our dispositions, that there is no certain guide which we seem willing to follow; or which, when followed, contributes to our happiness. This is said with reference only to mere human reason; or what is called rational views and principles of conduct unassisted by the light of revelation. Nevertheless, so it is; and every day's

* Preached on Christmas Day, 1810.

experience corroborates the truth of the remark.

Here we see a man blessed with prosperity, as it is called, and apparently happy. Go to him and reason with him; and ask him whether he be *really* such as he is represented to be:—but be sure that he answers with sincerity and truth. And what will be his reply? Some ridiculous whim has been thwarted; some capricious feeling has not been gratified; and many licentious schemes have not been carried into effect. Outwardly he is gorgeous and gay; inwardly he is sad and perplexed. The same picture of discontent may be drawn from scenes of bustle, of business, or of the gloomiest retirement. In short, there is, and there always will be, something both in the mind and heart of man, which is at variance with true happiness and content; unless, as the apostle says, the "DAY-STAR OF RELIGION rise in his heart."

A consideration of this nature would, to a reflecting understanding, seem to call aloud for reformation and amendment. A remedy for a disease so general and so corroding, would seem naturally to be wished for by every cultivated and thinking mind. A world so lost and gone astray; inhabited by beings

to whom *souls* are attached, and who will ever be considered as *accountable* human beings, presents to the imagination one of the dreariest and most discouraging of pictures. A wise man, as indeed were many of the heathen philosophers, would thus remark: "Whence and what are we?—for what purpose has this bright distinguishing faculty of *reason* been granted us, if it lead to no more substantial ends than ingenious experiment or philosophical deduction? If, every night that we contemplate the starry lustre of the heavens, or every day that we view the vegetation and blossoms of the earth, we only draw *this* inference—that the God who made us and them is equally wise and potent—while our hearts receive no consolatory assurances of what is to be our future state after the body shall have crumbled into dust?" —If, I say, such are the inferences necessarily deducible in a state unenlightened by *Christianity*, how ardently, how fondly, how impatiently should we look forward for the horizon to be illuminated with "the day-dawn," and for the day-star of scriptural comfort to rise and gladden our hearts!... My brethren, we were thus forlorn and wretched till the day-star of CHRIST arose; and these ge-

neral introductory remarks are pressed upon your consideration, for the better reception of the more particular inferences about to be drawn.

And first, St. Peter, in the chapter before us, talks largely upon the spirit and the ultimate ends of prophecy. He opens it with a beautiful and appropriate address to preserve moral rectitude of conduct. He tells his brethren to add "virtue to their faith:" that is, to *act honestly* as well as to believe sincerely: otherwise it is a mockery and an insult to Almighty God to suppose, that, because we believe in the merits and efficacy of Christ to save us, we are thereby not to "shake off the sin that besets us!" Redemption would be a superficial and inefficacious thing indeed, if men were to have their secret vices and hypocritical traits of conduct winked at, because they made a confession which cost them nothing:—namely, because they barely believed in the efficacy of Christ to save! No, my brethren, this was not St. Peter's language or doctrine. He wished his friends to be *wise* as well as *virtuous*—"add to your faith virtue, and to your virtue knowledge:" and, again, "to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and, to

these things, add godliness and brotherly kindness;" so that, you see, here is a complete and perfect picture of a human being enlightened by revelation, and resting ultimately for salvation through the intercession of his Redeemer. Now what is the consequence? Why, if these things, says the great Apostle, be "in you, and abound, they make you that you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." Hence you shall "make your calling and election sure:" for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.

The chapter then goes on to expatiate upon a variety of most important topics, concluding with a few pertinent remarks on the spirit and objects of prophecy. Unto these prophecies ye do well, my brethren, in the language of St. Peter, to take heed; for by their proper understanding and application is the whole Christian world most deeply interested. And surely what prophecy has been *half* so important, or more exactly and wonderfully fulfilled, than that which relates to the rising of the day-dawn and day-star, which, as at THIS SEASON, so peculiarly gladdens our hearts? The *birth of Christ*, who rose with healing on his wings to relieve a suf-

fering world, is an event so singularly marked out in the passages of scripture allotted to the Church service of this day, that it would be needless for you to hear a repetition of them in the present place. Hoping that you have duly weighed their importance, and intend partaking of the *Holy Sacrament* by which they are succeeded, I pass to the consideration of a few topics which may not be conceived irrelative to the subject and serious business of the day.

The *Anniversary of the Nativity of Christ* is indeed a singular æra in the history of mankind. By some it is viewed only with a curious eye, as a cold historical event; while others hail it as the season of indiscriminate revelry and exultation. Now, in what light should this sacred day be considered by *those* whose godfathers and godmothers have taken upon them such responsible obligations at the baptismal font? When we are initiated into the Christian mysteries, do we understand that the idle celebration of the anniversary of the birth of the founder of our religion is to form a part of the serious character we have taken upon us? And are those fitted to appreciate justly the agonising *death* of him, whose *birth* they hold in such a frivolous point of view? Nor let it be urged that this argument

may be pushed to extremes; and may inculcate a gloomy moroseness, if not a puritanical hypocrisy. Far be it from the author of them to lay down premises which warrant such a conclusion: but surely the preacher may be allowed to make a stand, and a firm stand, against that prevailing spirit of dissipation and frivolity; against those idle and wanton habits which convert the Sabbath into a day of business and shameless pleasure, and which brand the sacred name of *Christian liberty* with the most abject species of *slavery*: for, when men fall victims to their darker passions, what state of *servitude* can possibly be more deplorable? It is therefore the duty of every honest Christian minister of our most excellent church, to make a vigorous effort, and to crush (if it be in his power to crush) that shameless and unmanly spirit which converts innocence into guilt—or at least effeminises the noble and matchless character of a Christian. In times like these,* let us, for the love of God,—for the credit of ourselves—be discreet, prudent, and rational in our conduct: "walking honestly as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and

* A. D. 1810.

envying," but let us make manifest to the whole world, that the sacred light of the Christian religion, the DAY-STAR OF IMMORTAL LIBERTY, has illumined and animated our hearts.

We will now take a different, and, perhaps to some, a more convincing view of the subject.

The birth of Christ held out to mankind a hope of freedom from that forlorn and desperate condition in which they found themselves. His *death* confirmed the hope of this freedom; for by it we are redeemed from everlasting misery. A serious man, who knows any thing about the meaning and objects of Christianity, will connect, in his own mind, the *birth* with the *life* and *death* of Christ: that is, he will reflect, that although his birth was announced by angels to wondering shepherds who kept their watch over their flocks by night, yet this birth was followed up by a life of painful trial, and by a death of excruciating torment. How then is the anniversary of such an exalted character to be kept? Not by gloomy doubt, or discouraging despair; not by the banishment of a social and cheerful feeling; but surely, if not in this way, at least not in ridiculous and un-

meaning pursuits, which tend to lower our characters as thinking beings—and what is of more consequence, which do not prepare us for the serious services of the church which immediately follow—for the *fasting*, and *death* of Christ. If we know what the apostle means by the day-dawn, and day-star rising in our hearts, let us shew the fruits of this knowledge by a rational, and amiable, and christian-like conduct; and not suppose that certain seasons are appointed to be kept holy, only that they may be violated with impunity!—

I cannot avoid urging upon you, in terms most pointed and sincere, to consider, that the *recurrence* of this season is an event, which many others, who witnessed the *past* anniversary of Christ's birth, have not been permitted to live to see. Pleasure and pain, felicity and misfortune, are, in this world, so nicely balanced—the one seems to hang so much, as it were, upon the brink of the other—that there is hardly a human being, however fortunate he may consider himself, who, upon reflection, may not find a bitter alloy upon thinking of some dear relative or friend—a parent, a child, a brother or sister—who, on the *last* similar anniversary, rendered so-

ciety more sweet and pleasant by his engaging converse. This relative or friend may now be at rest in his grave. A chasm is made which cannot be quickly filled up: a wound is inflicted, which the lapse of time that has gone by cannot effectually heal. And what is the next consideration to be made? Whose turn will be the *next?* You must consider, therefore, that if you should not be permitted to witness *another* anniversary of Christ's birth, it will be some consolation for you to remember, that the *present* has not been spent in vain. Apply to those secret and sure monitors, composed by some of the most pious and able men of this country—apply to these, if you pretend to ignorance of scriptural texts, and these will lead you into the way of peace of mind, and satisfaction of conscience.

Reflect, that in proportion to the joy and rapture which a good man feels in the propagation of the Gospel, are the efforts of our implacable foe, Satan, to ensnare and to subdue. The seed should at this time take deep root, if it take root at all. Let us, standing as it were upon the threshold of a new year, begin it with the consideration that we bear the privileged and exalted characters of Christians. If the heathen lived morally without

the light of revelation, ought not the *Christian* to live unimpeached, when the day-star of Christ's birth rises to gladden his soul? Away then with every frivolous plea, and groundless pretence; but cast off the old man, and be clothed with the whole armour of God. Fly, with the shepherds, to make known to a wondering world that the Saviour is born; and having seen, with the wise men, his star shining in the east, come with them into the manger where the holy infant is laid: make the offering of a pious and penitent heart, and it shall be more graciously accepted than all the wealth and treasure which the richest have to bestow! Then, attend the aged Simeon, lifting up the child in his arms, blessing God that he has lived to see this day: which is to shine forth as "a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of the people of Israel." Yet lose not sight of your infant Saviour; but view him in the temple confounding the subtle members of the Sanhedrim, who confessed their astonishment at his answers!... Think of all these things; and ponder them, as his mother Mary did, in your hearts: and then frankly acknowledge whether the *birth* and *infancy* of such a wonderful and matchless child be not

better celebrated by serious and rational pursuits, (striving to become better, and nearer to salvation every day) than by merely ridiculous, unmeaning, and dissipated engagements! Let your *hearts* rejoice, and not the tongue only be clamorous. Let it be a joy pervading, animating, consoling, and sustaining you; carrying you through all trials and temptations, and bearing you up in the hour of death, and more awful day of judgment!

Such, in conclusion, my brethren, is the joy which a Christian will seek to attain in the celebration of the ANNIVERSARY OF HIS SAVIOUR. Learning, wealth, power, pleasure, admiration and splendor, are all secondary ingredients in the composition of a follower of Christ. The thought of a birthright to eternity, a blissful eternity, is, with him, paramount to every other consideration. He knows that wealth and power alone will soon be abridged by the swift and sure hand of death; and what avails the admiration of thousands in the dark and still regions of the tomb? Something better and more durable than all this, belongs to the character of a Christian. He who was born, died for our salvation; and such a reflection brings with it more exquisite satisfaction and transport

than the accumulated property, and combined strength and support, of the whole world! May we all, and all that are dear and near to us, be animated with sentiments and principles similar to these. May there be no back-sliding, and no lukewarmness; but, impressed with the importance of Christianity in the *birth* of Christ, may we never lose sight of it during a commemoration of his *life* and *death*; and, in the serious language of our holy church, may we fall on our knees, and beseech Almighty God to "give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armour of light; now in the time of this mortal life, in which his son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; so that, in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the quick and dead, we may rise to the life immortal, through him who liveth and reigneth with him and the Holy Ghost, now and ever! Amen."

SERMON IX.

JAMES, i. 27.

*Pure religion, and undefiled, before God and the Father, is this: To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.**

IT is impossible for language to be stronger, or precept to be purer, than that which you have just heard delivered. There is nothing in the whole scope of human composition that exceeds the force and perspicuity of this definition of the apostle, in regard to pure, unsophisticated, vital religion. The subject is placed directly before our eyes, and the mode in which it is discussed reaches our hearts as quickly. There is neither formality of exordium, nor obscurity of definition: but, simple and unfettered, the genuine character of the Christian religion is explained and en-

* June, 1811.

forced, in a manner which makes it almost impossible for the meanest intellect not to comprehend it. Let us therefore bestow an attention upon the subject, worthy of its importance.

First, we may remark, that this text is delivered in the true spirit of the writings of St. James; who seems to have been unusually anxious to place before his disciples and hearers, a plain, practical, and efficacious manner of performing religious duties. You discover, throughout his writings, a spirit of earnestness, yet of mild persuasion, to bring the converts to Christianity to a proper sense of the religion which they had recently professed. He unrobes it of all mystical clothing: he shews it before the eyes of all men to be substantially good; and that, the more it is contemplated, the greater will be the admiration and affection of the beholders. The shocking profanations of heathenism, and the absurd and cumbrous forms of the Jewish ceremonies, are, in the apprehension of the apostle, equally inimical to vital religion: and immediately before the verse of which the text is composed, he tells his followers, that, "If any man *seem* to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth

his own heart, that man's religion *is vain.*" You see, my brethren, even from this, that the *mere appearance* of religion availeth nothing: there must be the constant, habitual exercise of religious duties, otherwise your religion is vain. The Apostle then sums up the whole with the beautiful and forcible injunction contained in the words of the text; "pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep ourselves unspotted from the world!" We will now illustrate these most interesting and important words.

Observe, first, that St. James says, "pure religion and undefiled"—not merely religion as it is commonly professed—as the free-thinker, or the libertine, or the lax and indifferent hearer of God's word, would define and practise it—but pure and undefiled religion: without presumption, without arrogance, without hypocrisy, and without lukewarmness or back-sliding. The mind being awaked as to what is about to be explained, namely, that we are to receive a definition of what a Christian's duties really are—the Apostle goes on to observe, that our religion must not only be pure and undefiled in our

own eyes—but, before "*God and the Father.*" It is worth while to take especial notice of the caution and propriety with which genuine religion is described by him. If St. James had merely said "pure and undefiled," he might have been thought to let open a gap through which we should often escape with impunity, on account of the alacrity and subtleness with which we invent fresh excuses for the nugatory performance of our duties: therefore he adds, "before God and the Father." "Pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father." And what *is* this religion so pointedly and solemnly described? It is this:—"to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world."

Sublime and comprehensive definition!—breathing humanity, and illustrative of the very soundest doctrine: difficult, it is true, to put in practice—but, when constantly and zealously exhibited, the sum and the substance of all that is excellent and admirable in man.

"To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction"—means, to be ever attentive to those cases of deep distress and bitter anguish, which render human existence a burden almost intolerable to be borne: it

means, the performance of all duties connected with charity and brotherly love. A man cannot fortify the orphan in the hour of distress, or cause the heart of the widow to sing for joy, without feeling for the whole human race. The Apostle selects these cases as the most pointed, and calling for prompt and efficacious succour. Take an example, not perhaps a mere imaginary one, for your consideration. Here is a person, zealous in his religious duties as connected with *prayer*, both in public and private. He voluntarily offends no being "by word or deed;" "he even bears no malice nor hatred in his heart;" nay, he forgives his enemies; and, moreover, he hath a firm and long settled belief and faith in the efficacy of Christian redemption. Yet his religion is cold, selfish, and confined. He visits *not* the fatherless and widows in their affliction; his feelings all arise within, and return upon, himself alone; his circle of benevolence is cramped and confined; he diffuses around no social pleasure, no social happiness. Content to walk in the narrow circumference of what he conceives to be his own virtues, he is the constant worshipper of himself. The world benefits not by his mental and bodily exertions:

his existence is, therefore, a mere barren spot in creation; it is neither irradiated by the sunshine of christian love, nor fructified by the showers of heavenly compassion. He may exclaim "Lord, Lord!" but he "*does not* the *will* of his Father which is in heaven." Christ constantly "went about doing good." Nothing ever checked his progress, or damped his ardor. He saw that we were born for the comfort and support of each other; and through his Apostle, St. James, he tells us to "visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction."

It is the peculiar excellence of the Christian Religion to define with accuracy, and to fix boundaries with certainty, to what was before confused and irregular. The performance of all our necessary duties is so strongly enjoined by our Saviour, that no man in possession of his intellects can withhold his assent to it. The same divine character has illustrated by his discourses, and still more enforced by his spotless example, the beautiful text of the prophet; that man is called upon "to love mercy, to do justice, and to walk humbly before his God." This we must yet do, if we wish, according to the language of the Gospel, to "LIVE." The

moment we conceive resolution to supply the place of conduct, and opinion of practice—the moment a mere *assent* only to such and such doctrines, is considered to be equally efficacious with the *performance* of the same, that moment we surrender the dearest privileges we possess as Christians—of letting "our light so *shine* before men, that they may *see* our good works, and glorify their Father which is in heaven."

Yet, after all, our own unassisted efforts must be unavailing. The GRACE of GOD, the influence of the HOLY SPIRIT, the consoling assurances of FAITH, neither visionary nor unsettled, must touch our hearts, to purify them from the dross of worldly corruption. We must be stimulated by such feelings, and fortified by such principles, before we come, in the encouraging language of the Apostle, to "approach the throne of mercy, and cry ABBA, FATHER;"—and in the prayer that we offer up, we must also feel persuaded that we have, according to the opportunities afforded us, "visited the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and kept ourselves unspotted from the world."

And now, my brethren, do we, who wish and profess ourselves to be religious—do we,

according to such opportunities and means, put in practice the injunction of the Apostle? Are we active in the service of benevolence? How many hands have we caused to be raised to heaven, in begging blessings to be showered down upon our heads? When we look back upon the actions of the past day, can we solace ourselves, as we are about to offer up our evening sacrifice of prayer and thanksgiving, can we solace ourselves with thinking upon the poor wretched forsaken *orphans,* whose tender minds we have assisted by sound advice and useful instructions, or whose situations we have bettered, in a degree however trifling, by bestowing upon them our alms? Again; how many wretched and impoverished *widows*—perhaps with numerous families, and reduced to beggary from the vices and profligacy of those to whom their all has been *sacrificed*—how many objects of this description have we visited in their affliction? If we have done *none* of these things, our religion is neither "pure nor undefiled." We are strangers to vital Christianity. And mark, I beseech you, that by visiting these wretched objects, it does not only mean relieving them by *alms,* but sympathising with them in our *hearts;* feel-

ing for them; hoping God will bless and protect them; giving them what we *all* have to bestow, if we have not *wealth*—I mean, the consolations of real unfeigned sympathy. He who runs his daily and yearly course in the exercise of these benevolent duties, runs the race to which a Christian is called; and never let him doubt but that, by a zealous perseverance therein, he shall "in no wise lose his reward."

We come now to notice the *latter*, and in my humble apprehension, the most important part of the definition of a true religious character; and it is this—"to keep ourselves unspotted from the world."

I presume, my brethren, to call this the *most important* part of the Apostle's definition of a true religious character: for, from the love of false fame, of vain glory, or of some other equally petty feeling, we may be induced to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction; but a more difficult, and let me add, a more glorious task is performed, when we keep ourselves "UNSPOTTED FROM THE WORLD." Observe, the Apostle does not say, *unconnected* with the world; because he knew we were born to render each other all the social aid in our power; but he says, un-

spotted from the world—that is, not to let the contagious influence of vice and wickedness taint ourselves: not to become worthless and profligate characters: not "to walk in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of the scornful."

Undoubtedly, if we mingle with the world, we must expect to meet with characters of a description like unto those just mentioned. We must expect to meet with artful, vain, designing, scornful, and sinful characters; but we are to keep ourselves untouched, uncontaminated, *unspotted*, from such an intercourse. We are to shut our ears when the charmer charms, and our eyes when the harlot wishes to seduce. We are resolutely, and instantaneously, to turn an indifferent regard upon all that profligacy and wickedness may bring together to undo us. This should be our pride, our fame, and our triumph: not only to do positive good by visiting the "fatherless and widows in their affliction"—but, to "keep ourselves unspotted from the world."

Now, my brethren, in order to effect this desirable end, never let us compromise with truth, nor associate with shallow and worth-

less characters. Let us never meet vice half way. We may be entangled in the net before we are aware of its being thrown over us. Irresolute and fickle resolves are the forerunners of irresolute and fickle conduct. Let us have clear and distinct notions of what will taint and spot our characters; and, having these notions, let us inflexibly ACT up to them. The moment we hesitate, that moment our fortitude is shaken, and our character becomes questionable. It is in vain we soothe ourselves with an idea that we are, as yet, far from being "spotted," or tainted by our worldly intercourse:—the leprosy of sin has already infused its venom into our system, and is even visible in our constitutions, at a time when we think that corruption and disease can never find entrance.

The melancholy mischief of all this is, that, while we are endeavouring to act up to the Apostle's precept—while the orphan *is* relieved by our bounty, and the widow soothed by our sympathy, we fancy, although engaged in half the dissipation which the journals of the day record—we fancy that we are also "unspotted from the world:" while our evenings are devoted to promiscuous pleasures, our night is turned into day,

our family is neglected, our patrimony running to waste, and our preparation for eternity weak and inefficient!

Keep yourselves therefore, above all things, UNSPOTTED FROM THE WORLD. It is the most difficult, but the most glorious part of a Christian's character. Without it, you see, there can be no "pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father."

I draw to my conclusion, therefore, by exhorting all those who have any anxiety or earnestness in a Christian's high calling, to whom the death and ascension of Christ, and the infusion of his holy spirit are dear,—such, I conscientiously exhort, to keep always in view the heavenly character of a good and religious man, as described in the glowing language of St. James.

Throw aside, says this able and sound Apostle, throw aside all mere *semblance* and appearance of religion; act well, act humanely, honorably, virtuously. God the Father sees all your transactions, and will pass judgment upon the same at the latter day. Pure and undefiled religion—simple, efficacious, and sound conduct is this—"visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction;" go to them, comfort them, encourage and sus-

tain them; tell them, the parents whom they have lost they will meet with again; the husband, who has been taken away, will one day be restored. Be their adviser, friend, and comforter; and, moreover, as you are born to mingle in society, "keep yourself unspotted from the world."

The more active you are, the greater will be the good you will produce; provided this activity be evinced in upright and honorable transactions. I do not tell you, (the Apostle may be supposed to observe in amplification)—I do not tell you to keep yourself shut up; *unconnected*, and severed from the world—for you were born to aid and benefit each other; but I do most earnestly exhort and command you not to be *tainted* by the world. There is no necessity for such adulteration of character. Have firm and fixed notions concerning religion; and act rigidly up to the same. Never be afraid to give a reason of the hope that is in you. Consider how transient is the scene in which you mingle: and how foolish and dreadful it will be, to lose everlasting happiness from the indulgence of mere momentary and vicious pleasure. Assemble your friends together as your end draws near, and after many

years of painfully earned experience have passed over your head, tell your relatives (and more especially your CHILDREN) that your religion has been pure and undefiled before God and the Father—because you have "visited the fatherless and widows in their affliction"—and, what was more difficult and more glorious to perform, you have kept yourself "UNSPOTTED FROM THE WORLD."

SERMON X.

PSALM CXXV. 4.

Do well, O Lord, unto those that are good and true of heart.

THE benevolence of the royal author of this sentiment, is too well known to stand in need of elaborate illustration. Whatever were his deviations, whatever his failings and follies, he had certainly, in the main, an enlarged and philanthropic mind. The savage customs and barbarous practices of former times, and especially of the times of King David, shew us clearly the calamities that must befal every country which has not an enlightened system of policy; or, what is of more consequence, pure and settled principles of religion.

Whatever occasional aberrations may, therefore, have cast a shade upon the generally splendid character of David, there is no

man, awake to reason, and with his judgment matured, who can possibly deny him a benevolence and warmth of feeling? What can be more beautiful and affecting than his lamentation over the premature ends of Jonathan and of Absalom? There is so much tenderness, so much genuine feeling, guided and tempered by a taste the most exquisite and refined, in almost every pathetic expression which he pours forth on these memorable occasions, that the heart is sunk in sorrow, and the imagination becomes riveted to the melancholy situation of the mourner.

These instances are mentioned to shew that David had a sincere and genuine sense of pity and philanthropy; and that the wars which disturbed his reign, and in which he was so constantly and personally engaged, were the fault rather of the *age* than of the *individual*.

In those beautiful effusions of piety, or rather lyrical compositions, which are called the PSALMS, we meet with sentiments of the utmost tenderness and force. No man, except our blessed Saviour, seems to have indulged in greater tenderness of sentiment than did David. Immediately in communion

with his God, he pours forth the genuine feelings of the soul; and, in the warmth of devotion, or vehemence of poetical inspiration, he beseeches the Almighty to "*do well unto those who are good and true of heart.*"

Let us now see who are the characters alluded to in this sentiment.

This requires not, my brethren, any elaborate disquisition. We have no occasion to travel a very great way into life, before we meet with many characters the *reverse* of good and true ones. Not that such are in consequence "wicked and false." There is the proud man, the vain man, the foolish man, and the man of purely splendid talents, without one grain of compassion or generosity. These, it is clear, are not meant by the royal psalmist: it was not upon *these* that he invoked the blessing of Almighty God—but on the "good and true of heart."

Mankind are apt to be dazzled by splendid qualifications, and to give credit for virtues which the owners of them never possessed. We bow the knee at the shrine of the wealthy and the proud, but to the good and true of heart, we too frequently pay neither attention nor respect. True to all the selfish principles which predominate so grossly in our

dispositions, we pretend either not to view, or not to understand, the moral excellences and perfections of the amiable and the humble. We almost think that wealth and integrity are synonymous terms; and that to be good and faithful, we have only to obtain rank and riches.

Without considering how the great business of life is to go on, and who are to administer to their wants, real and artificial, there are *some* men who absolutely seem to fix a seal of ignominy and reproach upon the lowly and obscure. Not that the most respectable part of the community, for situation and talent, may *not* possess *goodness* and *fidelity*; but that the most humble are not, in consequence, the less "good and true." We must exercise our judgment with caution and discretion in these particulars. We must not be precipitate or severe in our conclusions. A good and true character cannot be mistaken, where once it displays its qualifications.

Consider, for one moment, the great and ever varied picture of human life. You see a man thoughtless, extravagant, wasteful of his patrimony, negligent of the concerns of others as well as of his own, and yet, prob-

ably, what is called a "*good natured*" and *well-meaning* character. Now, if this sort of good nature and purity of intention constitute, what the Psalmist calls, the being "good and true of heart," then, certainly, we should join in his prayer to supplicate the Almighty to do well to such character. But if, as I apprehend it will be conceded, this thoughtlessness and prodigality are absolutely baneful in themselves, and much more so by way of example to others—if they lead to sensuality and profaneness—if they fill the mouth with cursing, and cause the tongue to speak evil—if they make religion to be scoffed at, and public and private virtues to be despised, then, such a man, however good natured or well-meaning, has no claim to the character of those upon whom the Psalmist supplicates a blessing.

Again; we see men arrogant, and lofty, and proud: and it is said, in excuse, that their rank, or their situation, or their fortune, necessarily produces this—but that, notwithstanding, they are "good-natured and well-meaning." How benevolence and purity of intention are compatible with haughtiness and disdain, it is probably difficult to conceive. The indigent, you will say, have been

relieved by their alms, and the oppressed protected by their influence. But consider their *motives* and the *principles* of this relief and protection. Have they arisen from a pure, genuine feeling of integrity and philanthropy? and have they *uniformly* been shewn on occasions that called aloud for compassion and support? Those who are good and true of heart must be, and will be, of a *constant* and *uniform* character. No sudden fits, no momentary caprices, no fanciful schemes, or absurd plans, enter into the combinations of reasoning and of action which they form for the melioration of society. The sun which sets to day upon their benevolence, will rise to-morrow to witness it strengthened and refreshed by some new act of mercy and compassion. The orphan who pines from hunger, or the widow who moans in solitude, will meet more than once, or twice, or thrice, with food and raiment, and tenderness of feeling, and true charitable sympathy. A great deal of reputation may be supposed to be obtained by *one* splendid act of mercy:—but let us not thence infer that the author of that act is *necessarily* good and true of heart. Our door may be shut as frequently as it is opened; and, although we have the means,

we may as often deny as consent. Now, benevolence to be efficacious, must be *consistent*; as no one obtains the character of an honest man by doing *one upright* action, followed by two or more *unjust* ones, so no man can be considered as "good and true of heart," who is not uniformly, according to his means, merciful and kind.

Once more. We see many characters extremely dissipated, foolish, idle, or vain—but they are said, nevertheless, to be "good natured and well meaning." This surely is among the severest satires upon benevolence and integrity. Where is the virtue of profligacy?—in breaking the heart of the woman whom we have sworn, before God, at the altar, to cherish and support till death puts us asunder? Where is the benevolence of deserting our families for worthless associates and wretched amusements? Is *this* the school of *goodness of heart?* Are our children to be instructed by such precepts as are herein to be learnt? Is it thus that we fit them for the duties of the world and of home? And although no *harm* be meant, can we reconcile it to God and ourselves, thus to waste our time, to consume our patrimony, to degrade our understandings, and corrupt our hearts!

Far, far be it from every one here present, thus to estimate the character of the good and true of heart. Little do *they* know of benevolence, who practise it not first *at home*. Small are *their* pretensions to the appellation of good natured and well-meaning, who do not uniformly evince a correct and tender sense of feeling; and, however they may be inadequate to relieve by *alms*, do not give to the afflicted mourner all the sympathies of the soul. True goodness, like true religion, consists in assuaging the agonies of a "broken and contrite heart." It never shrinks from being active in scenes where it may administer consolation. It is present in prosperity as well as adversity: it offers advice, and gives good instruction; and, like the great founder of the Christian code, it is present in scenes of distress as well as of pleasure: it attends in the hour of joy, and whispers comfort at the moment of dissolution.

Let us describe the *good and true of heart* in colours somewhat more familiar and forcible; and let us see how our own principles as well as conduct correspond with such a description.

God Almighty, in this various and troublesome world—however he has planted thorns

which check our pride, and humble our hopes —has nevertheless, in his infinite goodness, scattered flowers which delight and refresh us. Some men are tyrannical, merciless, and hard-hearted; but, to oppose these, there are, as the Psalmist tells you, the good and true of heart. These soften the ruggedness of life's road, and render our journey along it at once pleasant and profitable. These are they who visit the distressed; who desert the palace for the hovel; who enter into scenes of the deepest poverty and wretchedness; and who shed the dawn of hope into the dungeon of despair. Does misfortune overtake us?—the faithful and affectionate friend comes to our relief; and, like another Samaritan, pours the balm of consolation into our bleeding wounds. Does sickness assail us?—the good and true of heart will visit the chamber of affliction—will watch by our side—will administer, to the utmost of his power, comfort to our thoughts, and impart fortitude to make us bear well our sufferings. In such moments, let me appeal to YOU who have *experienced* them, would you exchange your friend, distinguished for the "goodness and truth" of his disposition, for the wealthiest or most splendid connection which this world could bestow?

In this tumultuous and ever shifting scene, nothing can render life so truly cheerful as the possession of such friends as these; whose hearts are always ready to sympathise, whose arms are always open to receive and to protect; who are not influenced by the capricious sentiments of the many; who do not look with microscopic eye into every little venial error to which frail human nature is subject; who do not receive you at their threshold with forced smiles or obsequious servility, and afterwards turn round to vent slander and obloquy; but whose hearts, softened by all the mild and merciful principles of the glorious religion of Christ Jesus, glow with the same love, and melt with the same tenderness as yours. Fixed as the polar star in the firmament of heaven, the good and true of heart never shift with the changing scene; never draw back their influence, or withhold their friendly fires, to light and to conduct us along this vale of misery and tears!

Go into villages, remote in the country, in which perhaps only ONE affluent human being resides. See the number of poor, with large families, who daily flock around his gates—demanding the smallest pittance from a table replenished even to satiety! Hear

them ask; see how they supplicate, intreat, implore for mercy and support; their children shivering from nakedness, and almost famished with hunger. In vain they solicit relief. In vain they demand crumbs where hired servants have bread enough and to spare!

The rich man's heart is hardened; his hand is shut; and yet he is "good natured and well-meaning!" He gives pensions to this man, and he opens his house for the liberal reception of the fashionable and gay. My brethren, draw the inference yourselves. Can you class such a character among "the good and true of heart?" It is a violation of reason and of common sense to admit such an inference for a moment.

Now consider for one moment the reverse of such a character. Contemplate a different picture, and see if *then* you understand whom the Psalmist means by the good and true of heart.

In the midst of many poor and friendless fellow creatures, there lives a GENEROUS and HUMANE CHARACTER. Like the sun which scatters its radiance over a darkened landscape, does this benevolent character diffuse comfort round the neighbourhood by offering

aid to the poor and distressed. His gate is always open to the relief of humanity; his heart is always alive to the calls of pity and compassion: he is the friend of the ignorant, as well as of the naked: he admonishes, and he assists. He leaves to others the mere glory of intellectual fame, or of heroic conquests: *he* seeks only the reputation of DOING GOOD, and the victory to be gained over error and vice. The poor man blesses him, and the ignorant man reveres him. When he dies, his memory is perpetuated by other monuments than those of stone. The lisping infant, from generation to generation, shall point to the spot in which his ashes repose; and the meek hearted and "poor in spirit", shall shed a tear upon his grave—for he was GOOD and TRUE of HEART.

Let me, in drawing towards a conclusion, put this subject in a point of view which by some may be considered less general and hypothetical; more according with, and illustrative of, the doctrines and the example of our Saviour Jesus Christ. The leading feature of this great and guileless character was, HUMILITY. The vital principles of his religion are those which are closely connected with it; namely, contrition and repentance.

Now the ground-work of such contrition and repentance is, a consciousness of our unworthiness, our pride, our presumption, and sinfulness. We know, if we chuse to look into them, that our hearts are sufficiently gross and corrupt; but BENEVOLENCE and TRUTH are founded upon this conviction of our imperfections. We become, in consequence, sincere and penitent Christians; wiser and better men; in earnest with ourselves and with all that belongs to us; believing that the great end of human existence is not the multiplication of idle forms and frivolous ceremonies—in keeping asunder kindred dispositions from imparting to each other their wants, and wishes, and hopes, and fears—but in soothing the irritabilities of the sanguine, in checking the violence of the arrogant, and rooting out the depravities of the wicked. Our blessed Saviour was a striking and affecting example of all that is 'GOOD and TRUE' in the human character. He sat down with publicans and sinners. He washed his disciples' feet: he forgave the penitent sinner; and, my brethren, at however immeasurable a distance, and with whatever feebleness of effect, we must endeavour to copy so illustrious an example. Our talent is given us to do good in the most ge-

neral and comprehensive manner; and this can only be effected by constantly exhibiting, to all sorts and conditions of men, the excellence of our opinions upon moral and religious topics, and the worthiness of that conduct which is built upon GOODNESS and TRUTH of HEART. The great scheme of Christian redemption could never have been accomplished if our Saviour had mingled only with the higher classes of society. He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance: and we must, as much as lies in our power, act up to so perfect an exemplification of benevolence and truth. Consider, I beseech you, how fickle and precarious is human existence under all its modifications; and how the hand of death may to-morrow change that scene into *sadness* upon which our eyes are fixed with *transport* to day! Consider, in the course of no very great number of years, how many or how few of those, now assembled in this place of worship, will be found doing homage to their Maker. How all that is near and dear to us will be changed in form and in substance!—and then ask yourselves whether a state, so transient and perishable, is to be made instrumental only to the gratification of *pride*, and *pomp*, and *sensuality*, and *hard-*

heartedness: and, if so, whether *this* be the sure way of working out our salvation with fear and trembling? On the contrary, in meditating upon so serious and awful a subject, only be sincere with yourselves, and own, whether "salvation which belongeth to the Lord," may not rather be procured by imitating the meekness, the courtesy, the gentleness, and the lowliness of his Son Jesus Christ: in whom was neither pride nor guile, nor variableness nor shadow of turning; and who is the same to-day, and for ever!

And may the God of all mercy so soften the irritabilities of our frail dispositions, so lead us to substitute practical for theoretical good, so teach us to number our days, that the endeavor to obtain that wisdom which leads to life everlasting, may be the constant aim of our existence; may go out and come in with us; may lie down and rise up with us; may mingle itself with our morning and evening sacrifice of prayer and thanksgiving. So that, when it shall please the same Almighty power to call us hence, we may look back upon our past lives, with the comfort of having been GOOD and TRUE of HEART,—with the confidence of wise and penitent Christians, who have not sacrificed the end

to the means; the substance to the shadow; eternity for time; but, having led the life of the righteous, may find their "last end like unto his."

SERMON XI.

PSALM lxii. Part of v. 10.

*If riches increase, set not your heart upon them.**

IF there be one passion more than another, in the indulgence of which the Scriptures command us to be temperate and wise, it is that which is connected with a desire for gain; with a restlessness and anxiety after riches: without considering who is to gather them, and that we cannot carry our possessions with us into another world.

The royal author of the text was intimately acquainted with the heart of man; and in the psalm, from which it is taken, he seems to have described the principal things in which human nature errs. He says, "the children of men are mere vanity, are deceitful upon

* April, 1811.

the weights; moreover, that they are apt to trust in wrong and robbery." Again, he accuses them of vanity; and concludes by wisely exhorting them, that, if riches increase, they are not to set their hearts upon their pecuniary treasures.

By admitting the increase of wealth, it is probable that the mere acquisition of money is not forbidden, or was not considered criminal, by David. And indeed a similar construction is put upon the same subject by our blessed Saviour himself. Perhaps, in the nature of things, it must ever be so. In the complex and necessitous state of society, there must be indigence and abundance. One man hath more mental or bodily activity than another: his labors are greater; his exertions are more honourable; and plenty and prosperity crown his board in consequence. It seems to be one of the grand, leading, and distinguished characteristics of human nature, that the hope of reward, whether of wealth, or of fame, should stimulate our exertions. The man that, for a long and uniform series of years, hath toiled in a particular calling or profession, naturally looks for a more abundant reward than he whose conduct has been marked by supineness and inactivity. Nor

does this militate either against the best principles of human nature, or the wholesome admonitions of Scripture: for, "wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished, but he that gathereth by *labor* shall increase." And although the New Testament is strong and pointed in its denunciations against wealth; although our Saviour says that, "how hardly shall they who are rich be saved;" and that "a camel can more easily go through the eye of a needle, than a rich man enter the kingdom of God:"—yet, the clear and unquestionable deduction from these premises seems to be, that a *merely* rich man, who does *no good* with his wealth, who is never glad to distribute, who hides it in a napkin, or under a bushel—a merely AVARICIOUS man, stands no chance of enjoying the happiness of another world. The parable of Lazarus is a decisive demonstration of the whole christian theory, as applicable to wealth. Dives was punished, not for being rich, but for being pompous, profligate, vain, and hard-hearted. His servants were revelling in superfluities, "had bread enough, and to spare," while the pitiable wretch lay lingering at his portals a prey to poverty and disease.

It is, therefore, respecting the *misapplication*

of wealth, the "SETTING OF OUR HEARTS" and affections upon our treasures, that the Scriptures are so earnest in their exhortations, and plain in their denunciations of future punishment resulting therefrom. This, therefore, brings us more particularly to consider the ground and the object of the advice contained in the words of the text; in the illustration of which, it shall be my endeavour to place the whole in a clear, just, and forcible point of view.

Observe first, my brethren, that David does not say, "*Don't pay the least attention* to your concerns, to the increase of honorably gotten wealth, or to the enlargement of possessions;" but he says, "do not set your HEART upon riches; do not bow down to them as the Baal of your idolatry; "for where our heart is, there will be our treasure also."

Let us now see the reasons for this excellent piece of advice.

First, we are not to set our hearts upon any thing that is frail and precarious; but riches are frail and precarious. "Who shall deny the truth of this remark? And if wealth be not equally frail and precarious, why are our eyes every day fixed upon objects, now in misery and want, who formerly enjoyed

even the luxuries of life? The question is of no consequence here, *how* it comes to pass that riches are frail and perishable, for we see that they *are* so: we see that human weakness, or vanity, or presumption, has rendered the possession of them precarious; and that a knave sometimes enjoys what an honest man accumulates. We see too, that, even without reference to another individual, without any *social* connexion, that wealth is speedily dissipated, and extensive fortunes are shattered to their base—arising, if not from absolutely criminal, yet from absolutely ridiculous, irrational, or preposterous schemes of aggrandisement:—the mere lust of possession oftentimes endangering the positive advantages that we enjoy.

Yet further: riches are precarious from *other* causes more serious and tremendous; from political convulsions; from insurrection, from rapine, from revolution. An Englishman has every day abundant testimony of the truth of this remark; and as long as he sees his own glorious empire standing firm and triumphant, while surrounding kingdoms have been agitated like the trees before the blast of the hurricane—as long as the mild virtues of charity and beneficence are inculcated by his pastors and masters, and the

examples of his superiors; he will cheerfully, according to his means, be they great or be they small, contribute to the relief of that wretchedness, which, in a thousand channels, is at this moment* claiming his attention and imploring his aid!

You see then, my brethren, that wealth, in its very nature, must be precarious: that private causes, arising from discontent, from a lust of more, or from some wild or visionary scheme of your own—or from the knavery or negligence of those whom you trusted—have operated to the impoverishing of your resources; or, should you have escaped these private ills, there are public ones of a more aggravating and awful nature, which may reduce even the highest, from the luxury of a prince, to the homeliness of a peasant. "Set not your heart," therefore, says David—set not your heart upon your riches, should they increase—for they are necessarily *precarious.*

Another, and the second, reason, which the author of the text must have had in view, when he pronounced this seasonable admonition is, that, supposing riches to remain heaped up in countless coffers, they too often disgrace human nature by the bad qualities

* A. D. 1811.

which they engender. I say, my brethren, distinctly, *engender*: for, when we see a man, in moderate and respectable circumstances, amiable, admired, beloved, and praiseworthy on every account; on a sudden, from the acquisition of wealth, become vain, arrogant, and profligate; it is not too much to affirm that riches have a *generative* principle within them, which gives birth to the most depraved and worthless habits that can disgrace human nature. "Set not your heart" therefore, says David, upon the increase of your wealth, as it may make you an infinitely worse man—or, at any rate, cause you to forfeit all pretensions to that amiable and praiseworthy character which it was your happiness to have enjoyed before.

Now, my brethren, in whatever respect our ingenuity may aid us in the argument, that, in the case of a *sober, prudent* man, riches are not precarious, it will not, I apprehend, enable us to bring forward the least solid ground of objection that riches do not *vitiate*. And of this viciousness, various are the degrees and characteristics. For here we see a mightily proud man—sober and prudent, forsooth—but proud and disdainful. Proud of what?—that he possesses a great deal more

shining treasure than you do: that servants wait upon him in abundance: that his table is furnished with every luxury: that he moves in a splendid retinue, sheltered from the inclemency of the season, while he takes no notice, or trouble, or care, to avert the tempest which falls heavily upon the head of the poor unprotected sojourner, who has hardly a home when he reaches it, for his numerous and half-famished offspring! This is cold, sullen, genuine pride. This is poor human nature swelled to an artificial size, by the accidental, and, in all probability, unmerited possession of wealth. This is the case of one, in short, who never dreams that the poor man is travelling onward to repose in Abraham's bosom, while the torments of hell will be the future reward reserved for himself. "Set not your heart, therefore, upon riches," lest they corrupt you by making you *proud*.

Another characteristic of corruption, frequently attendant upon the pride and pomp of wealth, is *oppression*: premeditated, active, long continued, and inflexible oppression. Dives, or the rich man in Scripture, is not described to us as exercising positive oppression, and yet you remember what was his ultimate miserable lot? How must it

fare then with *him*, who, to the pride and sumptuous fare and clothing of Dives, adds the provoking sin of *oppression?*—who impoverishes the poor and suppliant—not that he may be rich, for riches he has in abundance—but that he may be distinguished, feared, receive the homage of slaves, and exult in the effects of his power. What shall we say? Does this species of oppression never accompany wealth? Does this lust of power and undue influence, and tyrannous conduct, never mark the career of men distinguishable for their mere possession of wealth? Do the cries of the oppressed, the prayers and entreaties of dependents, who can barely earn an honest pittance by the most painfully sustained labor, do these sounds never reach the ears of many a *modern Dives?* And, on the other hand, do not the stern decrees, the ferocious mandate, the resolute and unflinching conduct of the oppressor, too often extinguish the last spark of hope, and drive the oppressed to despair and perdition? Yes, my brethren, we have evidence quite sufficient to warrant us in our full assent to these positions, however strongly laid down. Nor can there be any excuse, hardly any accountable principle, for such

behaviour. Wealth is too often the parent of oppression. We set our hearts upon our riches, and we are anxious for their increase; and this we know cannot be sometimes effected without oppression, and a want of every charitable feeling which forms at once the ornament and consolation of a Christian. "Set not your heart, therefore, upon riches," lest they corrupt you by making you *oppressive* as well as *proud.*

Another distinguishing characteristic attendant upon wealth, is, *profligacy* and viciousness. In proportion to our pecuniary treasures, are the number of our temptations. We are, generally speaking, either sordid or thoughtless in the management of wealth: especially if large possessions come *unexpectedly* upon us. Now, the character of a virtuous and honest man, all the world knows, is greatly beyond that of a purely rich man without virtue and integrity; but, as mankind are too apt to be influenced by the adventitious qualifications of wealth and rank, it follows, that their efforts to please, by way of gratifying human passions, will be more powerful and unremitting. Accordingly, those charms, for which the aged and wise Barzillai felt something almost approaching to

contempt, have a striking preponderance with the greater part of the community distinguishable for their wealth. Hence the worst of evils ensue. Hence the husband abandons the wife, whom he has sworn in the face of heaven to comfort and protect till death alone dissolves their union! Hence the parent abandons his offspring; and not only an artificial and disgusting system of regulating our pursuits, and filling up our time, is produced, but a train of evils is laid, at once mischievous and incalculable. There is no saying to what extent this may be carried; or how the character of a man, formerly both honourable and applauded, may, by the profligate expenditure of wealth, be changed into that which provokes only pity and contempt.

Can you be surprised, therefore, that the language of Scripture is so plain and positive respecting the evils which arise from an excessive fondness for wealth?—or that David, in the words of my text, should be so earnest in cautioning us "not to set our hearts upon the increase of riches?"

As we are born for immortality, and as a preposterous attachment to wealth must necessarily unfit us for that blissful immortality held out for pious and virtuous Christians,

we ought constantly to keep the admonitions of Scripture in mind, and be ready to express, with our lips and in our lives, the obligations we are under to our Heavenly Father, for having dealt with us with so much sincerity, in telling us that our *riches alone* will not work out for us salvation and immortal happiness. So truly has the wise author of the book of Proverbs observed, "there is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing—while there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches!"

In the last place, my brethren, without dwelling upon the cares, anxieties, and disappointments, constantly and necessarily attendant upon mere wealth—whereby those, whose situations are comparatively moderate and poor, cannot be too thankful for an exemption from them—in the last place, fail not to consider, that there *are* riches of ONE particular denomination, respecting which, neither the authority of the Old or New Testament hath uttered any denunciation of future woe, or fixed any limitations in the enjoyment. I mean, the riches of GRACE, of PEACE, of VIRTUE, of HOLINESS—and these are the riches upon which our hearts cannot be *too devotedly set*. They are such, too, as the world cannot

deprive us of. They may grow with our growth, and strengthen with our strength. In prosperity they will be our brightest ornament; in adversity our never-failing consolation.

God seeth not, God judgeth not, as man sees and judges. The stately dwelling will soon be levelled with the ground: the proudest mausoleums will, in due time, crumble to dust. All our pageantry, and all our pomp, all our possessions, and all our power, avail us nothing in the grave. The last day shall come; and how can we, from the miserable recollection of our former fleeting *wealth,* how can we, from this recollection *alone,* stand up to view the tremendous majesty of Christ Jesus, when he comes, in all the glory of his Father, to judge the quick and the dead? Where will those characters, whom this discourse has described, where *can* they hide their trembling heads, and seek refuge from the punishment of heaven?

The avaricious, the proud, the oppressive, and the profligate, walk into utter darkness: but the poor in spirit, the peace-makers, the lowly, the hungry and thirsty after righteousness, shall be clothed in the bright purity of angels: shall carry the palms of never-fading

verdure in their hands, and wear crowns of never-fading lustre upon their heads. They shall think how meekly they endured adversity, and how abundant were the riches of their Redeemer's favor. They shall then confess, that a lowly and contrite heart is the temple wherein a Christian's tabernacle should be placed; and that, after enduring a few short years of chastening poverty, and wholesome privations, they shall for ever quench their thirst in the fountain of the Lamb of God:—their days shall know no darkness, and their years shall never have an end.

SERMON XII.

MATTH. xxii. 11, 12.

*And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, "Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment?" And he was speechless.**

"THE kingdom of heaven," says our Saviour, "is like unto a certain king which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding, and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which were bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: and the remnant took his ser-

* May, 1807.

vants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof he was wroth, and sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burnt up their city. Then said he to his servants, the wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all, as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment; and he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness: there shall be weeping, and gnashing of teeth."

The mercy of heaven is wonderfully conspicuous in the various parables, which our blessed Saviour was pleased to recite, in order to convert men from crime to justice, and from sinfulness to a holy life. If we presume to complain of want of sufficient incitements to, or of a thorough comprehen-

sion of, spiritual truths, we make a most unfounded and ungrateful complaint: for there are, surely, throughout the Gospels, so many incitements and encouragements held out, either in the way of persuasive argument or interesting parable, that he who is insensible to them, is shutting his eyes upon the sun and complaining of total darkness.

Among these parables, my brethren, none seem to be written in a more engaging manner than the one which forms the subject matter of our present attention.

The king who made a marriage for his Son, is ALMIGHTY GOD, who hath vouchsafed to afford us redemption through the sufferings of his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. By marriage or wedding, in the parable, is meant a *marriage feast;* the original Greek word denoting both. The people who were first invited to this wedding feast, did not chuse to come; some preferring one worldly concern, and some another: a too faithful picture of man, under all seasons and systems, when the cares and concerns of business, or the never-ending incitements of pleasure, seem to engross the whole of that precious time which is given him for the perfecting himself in religious duties and exercises.

By the *first* set of intended visitors are meant the *Jews*, under the old dispensation; and to whom the Old Testament was bequeathed. They rejected this spiritual calling. Moses delivered to them the law from Mount Sinai which they disregarded; and the prophets of old spake unto them by signs and by wonders, but they were still incredulous and disobedient.

The first servants being unsuccessful, the Lord of the feast very courteously sent forth others, to beg and *entreat* them to come;—"All things are ready—the dinner is prepared; the oxen and fatlings are killed, come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their way, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise." The remnant, however, were not satisfied with a refusal only, they resolved upon *killing* these kind messengers; "they entreated them spitefully, and slew them."

This part of the parable, as must be obvious to you, is typical of the conduct of the Jews to our Saviour under the *new* dispensation. They were commanded by the *old*, to turn from their evil ways; but by the *New Testament* they were entreated and importuned so to do by our Saviour; who spake to them

in the spirit of the parable—"the time is fulfilled: my Father hath sent me for your conversion: come within the pale of my religion." The Jews, however, as you equally well know, slew him and crucified him.

All nations under heaven—all the GENTILES are then solicited to enlist themselves under the banners of Christianity. This is illustrative of the servants going into the highways, and compelling the good and bad to be guests at the marriage feast. These obeyed the call. The room was quite filled. The marriage feast was crowded with guests.

It should seem that no one was qualified to appear at this festival, without the necessary ornament of a wedding garment; worn out of respect to the liberality of the founder of the feast. This injunction had nothing in it austere or forbidding; and it was an insult in a visitor, who knew the conditions upon which he was to be a guest, not to come with this appropriate clothing. One man, however, had the hardihood and rashness to try if he could be a partaker of the feast without this qualification. He stole in *without a wedding garment*, and sat down to the entertainment. But his mean and disingenuous be-

haviour soon met with its merited punishment.

The master of the feast, elated to find his generous invitation at last accepted, and to see the nuptials of his son thus graced by a numerous train of grateful visitors—naturally enough, in the midst of the banquet, mingled among his guests, to see if they were all accommodated according to their wishes, and were happy and satisfied with the entertainment. As he surveyed the circle, he observed a man, who, not clothed like the rest, was sitting down at the feast. "He saw there a man who had not on a wedding garment." Without the least hesitation, he approached and interrogated the stranger,—"Friend, thou knewest the order of my household, and the express conditions upon which thou wert entitled to sit down at my table; how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?" The question paralysed the visitor. Conscious of his mean and ungenerous behaviour, he was unable to utter one word in answer or extenuation; but, on the contrary, was "carried out speechless," and was justly punished for his folly.

My brethren, see here a faithful picture

of our blessed Saviour in regard to ourselves. See here the feast, which is offered to the Gentiles, and to every tribe and sect under heaven. Will you accept this offer? Yes, will be the reply: but recollect the terms upon which acceptance must be tendered. If you imagine you can be a partaker of the celestial banquet of Christ's kingdom, without being clothed with a *wedding garment*,—in other words, if you flatter yourselves that, without a new *life of repentance and amendment*, Christ will hereafter receive you into his kingdom—the supposition is both monstrous and unfortunate: for, instead of everlasting happiness, the melancholy reverse of everlasting misery will be experienced.

In applying this beautiful and impressive parable to ourselves, we may remark that, as the visitor rushed to the entertainment without attending to the servants' orders in clothing himself with an appropriate dress, so too many of us imagine that we have only to *express our readiness* to partake of heavenly pleasures, in order to become a participator of them; that amendment of morals, and rectitude of principles, are not requisite. Nothing is more gross and deceitful than such a persuasion, and such a conduct as must infallibly

be the result. If we *know* that we cannot be a guest on such terms, (and as long as the Gospel inculcates humility and repentance, the sinner must know that *arrogance and presumption* are not the marks of Christian excellence), if, I say, we know that we cannot be guests on such terms, what folly, what madness, what crime is it to press onward in iniquity, and to expect everlasting happiness as the wages of sin and wickedness!

If there be one error more gross, or one sin more daring than another, it is that with which we generally see profligate characters tainted—of fancying themselves qualified, in this world, for the company of the amiable, the modest, and virtuous, by substituting boldness and effrontery for talent and real worth. Look into society, and see how these characters (not clothed, it must be confessed, with the *garment of humility* or good sense) obtrude themselves on your notice, and endeavour to supplant others in your esteem! But never fail also to consider, that cowardice, ignorance, and wickedness, generally go hand in hand; and that such persons, upon being detected and interrogated by the master of the house, are "speechless"—and pushed from the threshold of that society where they

had dared to intrude. If such despicable human beings had any reasonable cause of complaint, whereby they could not enjoy the company of the amiable, then there might be something by way of extenuation; but they must know, that, in this country, and with the education which almost every respectable character receives, moral worth, integrity, mildness, and a grateful heart, will gain admission into any circle, however splendid; and will place the humble at the same banquet with the exalted.

Again: we may remark, in respect to events which are to take place in ANOTHER WORLD, that, supposing *admission* to be obtained, will men venture to lull themselves with the hope that *possession* will be secured? and that, because they have crept in like wolves, they are to be treated as lambs? The eye of God Almighty, which is constantly watching over all the works of his hand, will discover every criminal offender who has treacherously clomb into the fold of Christ's church; and will cast him into outer darkness, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

But consider the terror, the unspeakable awfulness of such a situation. If, amidst all the host of heaven—if, as every minister of

the word must with pain conceive—amidst your beloved relations and friends, it *should* be the lot of any one, here present, to have the dreadful question put, "how camest thou in here, not being clothed with righteousness?"—what must be the agony of that one to whom such interrogatory is put, and of his relatives and friends who hear it, and see the issue of it?

Compare, or rather conceive, something of this future, by your present, destiny. Here you have many, and, as you think, dear friends; who are striving to keep up a respectable appearance, and to be numbered with the honourable and the good. Presently, a discovery is made that such friends are only hypocrites; and that they have clothed themselves in every garment but the proper one; HONESTY AND WORTH. How your heart burns with indignation, or melts with sorrow within you? Can you bear to look upon this friend? And where will he hide his head to avoid the keen glance of your eye, and the cutting severity of your reproach? Miserable mortal! He is detected in the toils he has wove to ensnare others: his "companion and familiar friend" flies his presence; and his wickedness falls, heavily falls, upon his head.

All the tears which you may shed—if pity should at last touch your heart—all the vows you can offer, and all the prayers you may prefer, will avail nothing. The culprit is doomed to receive the punishment of disgrace, contempt, and ignominy, which will pursue him through life!

My brethren, in respect to our reflections upon *hereafter*, we should always reason with ourselves as if those who are dear and near to us in this world, were to be the *spectators* of our misery or happiness. These should awaken in us every fond and faithful hope to be numbered among the *true* fold of Christ's church; there to meet again those, whom death or misfortune has torn from us for ever here below. Such reflections will, I am sure, repel every impious thought of striving, as our Saviour says, to "gain heaven by violence," or of soothing ourselves with the fallacious idea, that we can *secure* our seat if we *possess* it.

It is not thus that the Gospel bids us prepare ourselves for hereafter. It is not by such absurd and presumptuous plans that we can build upon any sure foundation. We may persevere, if we please, in our folly; and may consider no "wedding garment" necessary

for the marriage feast of the lamb: but the consequence of our rashness will be—the losing of heaven for ever!

Strive therefore, in conclusion, to shew a proper sense of Gospel truths by a pure and spotless conduct: not in unmeaning riot and licentious amusement; not, as the apostle says, in drunkenness and revelry, but by a holy and unblameable course of life. If ever it should be our lot to meet hereafter, (and God of his infinite goodness grant it may!) recollect that, when we sit down at the marriage feast, we shall sit as pure intellectual spirits: every sordid lust being quenched, every unhallowed pleasure being banished, every mean desire being repressed, and every riotous enjoyment excluded from the paradise of heaven. We shall be clothed in those shining garments with which, in the book of Revelations, the elders are described as being clothed; and instead of anticipating examination and punishment, we may hope for perfect and undiminished felicity.

Be anxious therefore, my beloved brethren, to become a guest at the wedding feast of the Son of Almighty God. But be anxious to prepare yourselves for it by *fit clothing*, or, in other words, by a righteous and unsullied life.

Recollect the terms upon which, *alone*, admission can be obtained; and do not imagine you can become a guest upon other terms, or with other hopes. The GOSPEL furnishes every man with this *appropriate garment*: and if we chuse not to have recourse to it, but to our own blind passions and wavering principles, we must expect, if we do peradventure gain admittance, to have that question put to us which will cause us to "fall down speechless, and to be carried out into darkness and woe."

Recollect, again and again, that, at such a feast, all the guests will be on an equal footing; that precedence will not be granted to the rich, to the powerful, or to the celebrated for worldly fame: but the meek, the poor in spirit, the "hungry and thirsty after righteousness," the peace-makers, and sorrowful in heart, will all equally find a ready admission; an inexhaustible banquet; and a Master and Provider whose arms are for ever open to bless and to forgive!

SERMON XIII.

ROMANS, xiii. 14.

*But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.**

PERHAPS no human being was ever better acquainted with the vices, and follies, and wickedness, of the heart of man, than the great Apostle from whose writings these words are taken. You see, throughout his epistles, such an earnestness, such anxiety, such zeal and energy displayed, to meliorate the condition of his fellow creatures—to root out their depravities, to make them new characters, "alive unto God," and "dead unto sin,"—you see this strain of argument and persuasion so strikingly displayed in all his works, that it is impossible to turn an indifferent ear

* May, 1808.

to admonition which comes from such a quarter.

The verses immediately preceding my text, bear a very impressive character. The Apostle seems moved by a peculiar energy, which rises with the awfulness of his subject. He tells the voluptuous Romans, that it is high time to awake out of sleep: that is, it is high time to put away the follies of the child, and the vices of a heathen: for now, says he, is our salvation nearer than we believed. Now is the moment approaching, when everlasting happiness is to be our lot, if we shew ourselves worthy of the divine visitation. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: in other words, life is fast wearing away, and immortality approaches: let us, therefore, cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light; which words are explained in the succeeding verse, as "walking honestly in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying." And then, as an efficacious antidote to all these vices and follies, he earnestly and solemnly exhorts the community which he addresses to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not

provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."

This I apprehend to be the general scope or meaning of the verses connected with the one which more particularly forms the subject matter of this discourse. And well, my brethren, would it be, if we Christians listened attentively to the Apostle's injunctions, and strove to put them in practice. Well would it be for the repose of mankind, if each individual of a Christian community would endeavour to put on Christ Jesus the Lord: that is, would endeavour to act, to lead his life conformably, to the precepts of our Saviour's Gospel.

Alas! when we do this even to the utmost of our abilities, we are but poor representatives of *him* whom the Apostle calls upon us to imitate; but however we may fall greatly short of a *perfect* representation, there can be no plea or excuse for our not *endeavouring* to become *wiser* and *better* men, by gratifying rather the wishes of the mind, and the cravings of an immortal soul, than the wants of a perishable body.

The ministers of Christ's Gospel importune *you* with the same earnestness to lay aside the

carnal appetites, and to be anxious only for spiritual comforts. This doctrine must ever be inculcated by those, who properly appreciate the force and tendency of the Gospel, and to whom the everlasting happiness of a Christian's soul is dear. Let me, therefore, at the outset of these remarks, beseech you to believe, that those to whom the functions of the church, as by the *laws of this country* established, are entrusted, shew an equal earnestness, have an equal interest, an equal glory, in the propagation of gospel and apostolical doctrines, as any religious sect upon the face of the globe—however that sect may assume to itself an affected holiness, or win upon the minds of uninstructed hearers by the felicities which it holds out to the elect, and by the speciousness of its opinions upon *faith*, unsupported by *works!*

We call upon you, equally with any sect or profession, to put on Christ Jesus the Lord. We preach not ourselves, but the same heavenly preceptor. Yet, my brethren, we should be ashamed to address our flock every revolving sabbath, if our *lives* did not; to the best of frail human nature's exertions, correspond with our professions, and our doctrine here

delivered. Never fail to consider that it was by the *exhibition of practical virtues,* by the constant, daily manifestation of all those delightful accomplishments, and still more delightful principles, which render man a being worthy of the God who created him, that our blessed Saviour shone paramount to every preceding and every succeeding human character. It was not, with him, a perpetually recurring maxim or speech—only want or wish, and the thing shall be granted you. It was, on the contrary, act as well as profess: put your hand to the plough, and do not look backwards: do not behold a wounded fellow-creature, and pass by on the other side; but come and relieve him; pour oil into his wounds, and wine into his body; sustain, uprear, comfort, attend him; put him upon his beast: in short, take care of him. And, my brethren, we best evince the care we have for your soul's welfare, when we not only pray and preach, but *act well:* when we carry the ark of the Lord with us whithersoever we go—when we forgive our brethren, and assist in the conversion of infidels and sceptics. If it be only *one* sect who preach the Gospel, what do the others preach?—If

we are said *not* to be preachers of the word, what is it that we do preach? and from what sources are our texts and observations taken?—The BIBLE is, I thank God, in this place of worship, as honestly opened, and as honestly expounded, as in any to which Christians resort; and whatever be the deficiencies of these my exhortations, they are abundantly supplied by the discourses of my Associates in the same career.

These remarks will not be considered irrelative by those, who know how much opinions of a certain complexion are apt to warp the judgment of hearers, and to counteract the proper influence which they should feel: for no discerning and reflecting mind will tolerate the supposition, that the ministers of the *church of this country* cannot be the ministers of the church planted by GOD and his SON JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD.

To put on "the Lord Jesus Christ," is to endeavour sedulously and sincerely to root out the evil propensities of our nature, and to substitute God for the world. To put on the character of our blessed Saviour, is to be meek, patient in tribulation, slow to judge, yet sincere in passing judgment. To loathe every thing which savors of narrow minded-

ness, bigotry, or persecution: to be easy of access, and frank in all manner of communication: to have mercy upon Samaritan as well as Jew, upon heathen, infidel, and heretic: to have a pure, calm, rational, and devout sense of worship; and to let our prayers be uttered in private as well as public, for God will openly reward. To put on the Lord Jesus Christ, is to have a benevolent, charitable disposition: to elevate the thoughts towards heaven: to seek happiness in spiritual exercises: to quell every rebellious lust, and to care little for the clothing, and fare, and condition, and circumstances of this life, compared with those of an immortal state of existence. Not to mind those who kill the body, but those that are able to destroy both body and soul. He who acts thus, does in a great measure put on the Lord Jesus Christ: for, it must over and over again be inculcated, that mere opinions and professions are not the *essential characteristics* of a Christian: we must shew forth the praise of our Creator in our *lives* as well as with our lips.

If, my brethren, the Christian religion has in it one distinguishing excellence more than another, it is that by which the *intentions of the mind* are to be made known by our *actions*.

We are not to sit idly and foolishly within our porches, and see the sun rolling on in his active and majestic course from day to day, and year to year: we are not to view all creation animated with life, and busied in a regular and astonishing fulfilment of its several duties —we are not to breathe the incense of sacrifice, raised, upon the golden wings of the morning, to the throne of a just, and great, and good God, with indifference and insensibility—and fancy that *we alone* are exempt from the cares and offices of our calling, thereby remaining idle spectators, upon the bended knees of misconceived piety, of every thing that is passing before our eyes!—No: we are to lift up our *hands* as well as our *voices*—we are to go about doing good—to inquire into the wants of the poor and afflicted—to be practically useful—to be of general service, as much as lies in our power, to the whole race of created human beings.

St. Paul adds, as the best way of enabling a Christian to imitate his master, "to make no provisions for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." And why is this injunction so particularly given? It is because the Apostle was well aware, that, as long as we are under the dominion of our bodily appetites, so long

is it impossible for us to put on the Lord Jesus Christ. The body and the soul, like Satan and our blessed Saviour, are necessarily and always at variance; and if we chuse, with our senses awakened, and with our everlasting salvation at stake, to prefer the former to the latter, we must abide by the ill effects of our choice.

Let us now more particularly see why the latter part of the Apostle's injunction was so necessary to be imparted.

We may suppose a human character, in the eyes of the world, blameless—one who has regularly frequented the temple of God's worship, and who prays to him with the same regularity when apart, and shut up in his chamber. One who, in fact, has every external mark of human perfectibility upon his character—to the purblind view of man. Commune with such a being, but intreat him to be sincere and explicit—and then ask him how often the wretched provocations of carnal appetite have been nearly leading him astray from his Maker? How often covetousness has betrayed him into discontentment of his lot? How often he has sighed for more, or for another man's possessions?—and how often the still, small, but irresistible voice of con-

science, has whispered to him the commission of some act which he ought *not* to have done, or the *omission* of others, which it was his bounden duty to have performed?

Now, what is the inference of all this?—Why, if a character, generally speaking, respectable and reproachless, should plead guilty to most of these interrogatories, how must it fare with a decidedly profligate human being?—with one who has deliberately put on *Satan* instead of *Christ*, and who has sacrificed to the lusts of the body in a thousand unhallowed instances? Let no such wretched human character deceive himself: let him not fancy that he can trample with impunity upon the dearest rights; that he can tear down those fences which society plants between man and man; and that the widow's and orphan's portion, moistened with the bitter tears of adversity, can be seized upon without chastisement and redress. The depravity of man's heart was well known to our Saviour, and to the great Apostle of the Gentiles. Alas! we see it in too many instances in the modern world. Our *public Journals*, our Registers of Intelligence, are too often filled with recitals, which would seem to belong rather to a *pagan* than to a

christian country; and yet, we read these things—fancy ourselves amused with them—and shut our eyes, and make our hearts cold, against incidents, which ought to harrow up every honest feeling, and to teach us an awful lesson not to provide for the exclusive gratification of the lusts of the flesh. If men would only mix a little larger portion of morality and religion in their reflections upon these things, society would be gradually ameliorated; and the people of a civilised country would more emphatically shew themselves to be a people worthy of salvation and immortality.

Let me conclude, therefore, by seriously exhorting every reflecting human being here present, not to lay up provision for the flesh, but provision for the spirit. Not to look within the limited horizon of this world's view, but to elevate his eyes, his heart, and his hands, towards that great and everlasting power, who has created him, from the dust of the earth, to be a partaker of the happiness of heaven. Let us all, my beloved brethren, lay these things seriously to our hearts; and strive each, in our several callings and situations in life, to shew the fallacy of a worldly spirit, and the danger of carnal gratifications.

Let us spurn at a provision which supplies such few wants, and which, to-morrow, the hand of death may take away. Let us hasten to have delight in those pursuits which afford a *never failing* supply; which cherish the mind, and which nourish the soul. Let us seek for pure pastures, watered and refreshed by the streams of immortal life. There let us repose; there let us set up our tabernacles: there we may anticipate those scenes of delight which await the spirits of the just, who die in the faith and fear of their Redeemer.

Who, as he thinks on these things—as he is conscious of the transport which such thoughts impart—would even afford one look or thought upon the provision with which "the lusts of the flesh" are fed? Or who, as he witnessed the departure of such a blessed character out of this world—as he saw *how a Christian could die*—would not weep with heartfelt anguish upon all the sacrifices he had made to his body, and at the little provision which he had collected for his soul? Who among you, seeing the just man die, would not exclaim:—"Grant me, O God, the purity of a Christian. Grant me his repose through life, and his hopes in the hour of death. Enable me daily to subdue the lusts

of the flesh; to enjoy the consolations of the righteous; and "after this life to have the fruition of thy glorious Godhead, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

SERMON XIV.

GENESIS, xlv. 28.

*And Israel said, it is enough: Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die.**

THE history of Joseph, to which it will be obvious that these words relate, is perhaps the most beautiful and affecting, as well as the most ancient, story on record, of filial affection, and of parental solicitude. The *manner*, also, in which this interesting history is narrated, is quite unparalleled for its simplicity, and power of exciting the best sensibilities of the human mind. In selecting the words of the text, I purpose drawing your attention to that part of the history which comprehends the *conclusion* of it; that is, which relates to Joseph's making himself known to his brethren; to the introduction of his father Jacob, or Israel as he is now

* February, 1811.

called, at Pharaoh's court; and to the last words and dying scene of Israel himself. The subject, my brethren, merits your closest attention.

The forty-fifth chapter opens thus. "Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him: and he cried, cause every man to go out from me: and there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I am Joseph: doth my father yet live?" Observe, I entreat you, the peculiar force and exquisite tenderness of this interrogation. The very first thing that rushes upon his mind, and gains utterance from his tongue—after a copious effusion of tears had eased the agony of his feelings—the very first thing that prompts him to speak, is, an inquiry after the existence of his beloved father; whether he lives; where he is situated; how he fares; and what are the sources of his comfort in his declining years. Now mark, my brethren, what followed this question of Joseph. "His brethren could not answer him, for they were troubled at his presence." And why were they thus troubled? What

was there of severity, or of harshness, in the interrogation? The question stung them to their hearts, because their consciences revolted at the base usage they had shewn towards their brother, and at their treacherous deception of this very father, about whom Joseph is so fondly anxious. You may remember, that, after they put him into a well, he was sold in Egypt; and that, to convince his father of the death of his beloved Joseph, they took his many-coloured coat, and dipped it into the blood of a kid which they slew for the purpose; and, shewing it to their father, bade him consider it as an attestation of Joseph's death. In consequence, we are told, that "Jacob (his father) rent his clothes, and put sack-cloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days. And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted; and he said, for I will go down into the grave for my son, mourning. Thus his father wept for him."

To return to the subject from which we have thus slightly, but not unappropriately, digressed. Can you be surprised, my brethren, that these brothers, whose base conduct has been thus detailed, should feel the

compunctious visitings of human nature, upon being interrogated by the very brother, whom they had so shamefully treated, concerning the well-doing of a parent whom they had not less shamefully deceived? They were troubled at the presence of Joseph: they could not answer him: they had not the courage to look him in the face: they turned pale and trembling from a consciousness of their guilt. The light of truth and benevolence was too vivid and piercing for the weak eyes of treachery and cowardice. And what followed? Any upbraiding on the part of Joseph? Any remonstrance concerning their wicked and perfidious conduct? Nothing of the kind. With angelic mildness and mercy, he says not one harsh word in reply. He sees their shame. He witnesses how severely they then felt the force of their past nefarious conduct. Leaving them, therefore, to the reproaches of their conscience, he advances, like the good Samaritan described by our blessed Saviour, to ease the bleeding wounds inflicted upon their hearts. He soothes them, and bids them no longer think upon what is passed:—the remembrance of it being buried in his own bosom. "And Joseph said to his brethren, come near to

me I pray you; and they came near: and he said, I am Joseph your brother whom ye sold into Egypt. Now, therefore, be not grieved nor angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life." What feeling, what wisdom, what magnanimity, were combined in this address?—holding out a striking lesson to every family in a Christian community, to be reconciled to each other, to forgive and to forget, and to put a wise and moral construction upon every event which has happened to produce a temporary discomposure and embarrassment. But let us pursue the narrative.

Joseph explains what is meant by his declaration of God having sent him thither, inasmuch as he had been enabled, by divine interposition, to warn Pharaoh against the famine which was about to rage in the land. He then goes on to beg of them to request their father to come down to him in Egypt, to witness the prosperous situation which he held in Pharaoh's court. He tells them that five years of famine are yet to follow, and thus forcibly concludes his exhortation. "And behold your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin, that it is *my mouth* that speaketh

unto you. And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and of all that you have seen; and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither. And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck, and wept; and Benjamin wept upon his neck. Moreover, he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them: and, after that, his brethren talked with him."

It is impossible, my brethren, for human language to convey a more affecting and interesting account of the reconcilement and transporting happiness of a long-severed and now united family, than in the words which have just been repeated to you from holy writ. But, throughout the whole, mark the noble and truly affectionate conduct of Joseph. Mark the greatness of his mind, and admire the benevolence of his heart. How he labors to give vent to his feelings—to convince his brothers that he really forgives them, and that what is past is buried in oblivion: that he now cares for nothing—save only *one thing* which is wanting to make his happiness compleat—the presence of his dear and long-separated father! Again he weeps; and again he embraces all around him: and they, in turn, embrace him, and fall upon his

neck and weep! And then, after pausing a little from this violent but natural indulgence of feeling—after recovering somewhat their wonted strength and spirits—they proceed to discourse a little; to talk of the thousand things which had happened during their separation; and, no doubt, again and again to express their astonishment at their brother's elevation, and their gratitude for his forgiving disposition. But it is time to introduce more particularly the FATHER OF JOSEPH to your observation.

The confusion or noise which followed the discovery of Joseph to his brethren, reached the ears of Pharaoh; "and it pleased him well and his servants." Accordingly, he commands very rich presents to be borne to ISRAEL, and every accommodation to be offered for bringing over his whole household establishment into Egypt. Joseph, in particular, is both active and bountiful in his measures: and he dismisses his brethren, to bring down their father speedily, with a very useful piece of advice: "see," says he, "that ye fall not out by the way." The brothers take their course to the land of Canaan; "and they came into the land of Canaan unto Jacob their father. And told him saying, Joseph

is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt. And Jacob's heart fainted; for he believed them not. And they told him all the words of Joseph, which he had said unto them: and when he saw the waggons which Joseph had sent to carry him, the spirit of Jacob their father revived. *And Israel said, it is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive: I will go and see him before I die.*"

Accordingly, the venerable patriarch leaves the land of Canaan; and being comforted and fortified by God's having "spake unto him in the visions of the night," he goes down with his children and numerous household establishment to Egypt, to enjoy the splendid and unlooked-for hospitality of his son. "And he sent Judah before him unto Joseph, to direct his face unto Goshen; and they came into the land of Goshen. And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father to Goshen; and presented himself unto him: and he fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while. And Israel said unto Joseph, *now let me die since I have seen thy face; because thou art yet alive.*"

Suffer me yet to pursue, in a summary manner, the concluding scenes of the life of

Joseph's father; who is received by Pharaoh with marked signs of distinction and courtesy. The infirmities of his advanced age pressing heavily upon him, he begins to prepare himself for his latter end. Having seen all his children comfortably settled, through the interest and by the generosity of Joseph, he seems to have nothing on this side the grave which has any further claims upon his attention. Accordingly, the inspired historian devotes the forty-eighth and forty-ninth chapters of the book of Genesis, to a minute and interesting account of Israel's last instructions to his children, who are assembled round his death-bed; and we find, in the thirty-third verse, of the forty-ninth chapter, that, "when Jacob had made an end of commanding his sons, he gathered up his feet into the bed, and yielded up the ghost, and was gathered unto his people."

The ensuing and last chapter of the book of Genesis is devoted to a description of the solemn interment of Joseph's father; and, afterwards, to an account of Joseph himself; "who died, being an hundred and ten years old."

Having thus devoted a considerable part of this discourse to a brief elucidation of the

principal events that befel Joseph and his father in their latter years, it remains to fill up the concluding part with a few practical observations, which a narrative, so pregnant with useful instruction, cannot fail to supply.

Three things then, my brethren, seem principally to suggest themselves, arising out of this narrative; and they are these. *First*, never let us act basely and treacherously towards those closely allied to us by blood, from a supposition that momentary success will insure all the ends we have in view, by resorting to violent measures. *Secondly*, let us forgive our brethren as Joseph did, on their shewing marks of contrition, and making protestations of amendment. And *thirdly*, let us invariably "love and honor our father and mother," and evince an affectionate and dutiful disposition towards them—since this alone will make their grey hairs descend with comfort to the grave.

The first ground of observation, arising from this narrative, requires but little illustration or enforcement. We must not receive and abuse those who are near and ought to be dear to us. A conspiracy against a relative is a conspiracy against the best

feelings of the human heart, and certainly against our own happiness. Temporary success may attend it. Our selfish and abominable views may be gratified in some degree: but what is the nature of the *completest* triumph that ever attended such nefarious conduct? There can be no joy; no comfort; no solid satisfaction—and wherefore? Because the fear of detection embitters every moment's occupation. The brother whom we have abandoned, and the father whom we have deceived, will one day meet and interrogate us as we ought to be interrogated—and shall we not, like Joseph's kindred, be unable to answer one word, and be "troubled at their presence?" Besides its being a positive violation of the laws of God and man, such a crooked and shallow policy—I ought rather to have said, such ferocious and inhuman conduct—must necessarily, in its effects, go to shake the pillars of all social order; and convert the earth, which was meant to be a source both of comfort and sustenance to us, into a desert of devouring brutes. But let us no longer pursue an argument, founded upon the supposition of so monstrous a line of conduct being evinced in a Christian country. God grant, at least, that not *many*

examples of such fraternal discord may come within the circle of your experience!

The second branch of observation, springing from this instructive narrative, is, the exercise of a magnanimous and forgiving disposition, like unto Joseph's. Indeed, so truly exemplary, noble, and heroic, is Joseph's character, throughout the whole of his history—so strictly honorable, so inflexibly upright, so inimitably gracious and conciliating, that it is equally beyond all adequate praise and description. There is nothing so perfect, in all its parts, in any other picture which is delineated in the Old Testament. It comes the nearest to Christ's own example, of any thing which is recorded in holy writ. And although no *single* discourse, entirely devoted to a description of Joseph's character, could possibly do it justice; yet, at the close of the present, and as connected with the previous matter, I earnestly hold up, for your admiration and imitation, his mild, his heart-feeling, and forgiving disposition. This was the *seventy times seven*, afterwards so strongly enjoined by our blessed Saviour. The affront offered unto Joseph, by his brethren, was the most gross and wicked of all offences: an accumulation, or adding together, of infinite little

faults—an exhibition of some of the basest traits that ever disgraced the human character....and yet, he forgives all! He sees his dear brothers around him, in a place of prosperity wherein he hath the chief direction, and he wishes only *them* to be partakers of such comfort. "Think no more," says he, "of what is passed, for I have been an instrument in the hands of providence, to bless you and my father in your latter years." Then he embraces all his brethren, and weeps upon them: and they in turn embrace him, and, with tears of joy and shame, solicit and obtain his frank and entire forgiveness.

In the third and last place, my brethren, we will say a few words only upon the truly affectionate and dutiful conduct of this illustrious character towards his venerable parent. It seems, indeed, that the fifth commandment of the Mosaic law had been, with a prophetic spirit, fully comprehended, and rigidly practised by Joseph. He "honored his father and mother," and his days were "long in the land which the Lord his God had given him" in such prosperous abundance. His chief solicitude was, about the existence and comfort of his father, from whom he had been so long and cruelly separated. For before he

made himself known to his brothers, and while it was necessary for his purposes to act a feigned part, upon his brethren indirectly mentioning their parent, and resuming some other subject, Joseph, you find, brings them back again to the notice of their parent. "Is your father well," says he, "the old man of whom ye spake? Is he yet alive?" "And they answered, Thy servant our father is in good health, he is yet alive; and they bowed down their heads, and made obeisance."

Now, my brethren, when these things collectively were imparted to Israel, or their father, you can easily conceive the transporting effect of such communication upon the pure feelings of an aged and affectionate parent. You can readily imagine that this venerable man shed tears of joy when he exclaimed, in the words of my text, "*It is enough: Joseph my son is yet alive, I will go and see him before I die.*" Meaning thereby—my anxieties are at an end: my happiness is complete. The dear child whom I mourned as dead, is alive. Let me only see him, and give him my blessing. Let me pour my tears of inexpressible transport into his bosom; let me only press him to my heart: and then, if it please God to take me, I

shall descend with perfect resignation to my grave."

So, that you see, here is an old man, in a great degree afflicted with misery and misfortune in his latter years, receiving consolation and happiness from the affectionate solicitude of a dutiful child. All his past sorrows seem to sink away in remembrance—his miseries are no longer thought of—and one bright gleam of sunshine tinges, as it were, the evening of his days. The death-bed of Joseph's father was, if I may so speak, a most enviable death-bed. It was the departure of a thoroughly good man, with his children kneeling down in prayer by the side of him, and soliciting Almighty God not only to assuage the latter moments of their parent, but to "make their own end like unto his."

Ye, therefore, who may be blessed, as Joseph was, with an aged and affectionate parent, strive, as Joseph did, invariably to shew him homage and respect. Let your first and last inquiries—let your morning and evening meditations—bend, in some way or other, to a consideration of his comfort and repose. There is no feeling so pure, there is no bliss so perfect, as that which is interwoven in a reciprocity of sentiment between parent and

child. Earth hath nothing in it that so closely approximates us unto heaven, as the perfect fulfilment of this sweet and sacred duty. May the history of Joseph be indelibly engraven upon the minds of the YOUNG; and may the remembrance of the comfort of his aged father, cheer and animate the latter days of the OLD!

SERMON XV.*

MATTH. xxiv. 12.

And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

THESE words were spoken by our Saviour in a very long and earnest conversation which he held with his disciples, a short time before he suffered. The conversation related to the "sign of his coming," and "to the end of the world." As he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, "tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" The question, my brethren, was natural enough with those who were apprehensive of speedily losing their beloved master; and of some great and portentous event, which, rending the earth, and air, and the heavens, was to be the forerunner of Christ's final judgment passed upon the sons of men.

* November, 1809.

With a promptitude and condescension, for which he was at all times eminently distinguished, our blessed Saviour not only complies with so very pointed and serious a request, but, in a most minute and impressive manner, he holds a discourse with his disciples which extends to the end of a very long chapter; comprehending not fewer than *forty-eight* verses out of the *fifty-one* of which that chapter is composed. The chapter in question is, undoubtedly, one of the most solemn and interesting of those in the whole of the New Testament. The subject, discussed in it, is exceedingly awful; and the manner of handling it at once powerful and particular.

It would be barely possible to touch upon even the chief topics urged in our Saviour's address, within the limits of the present address; but *that portion* of it, immediately connected with the *words of my* text, and embracing a very wide range of observation, it shall be my endeavour to explain and to enforce.

One other preliminary remark may with propriety be submitted; namely, that of so momentous, and I may add, mysterious a nature, was the subject discussed by our Saviour considered, that, of the day and hour when the dissolution of the world was to take

place, we are told by himself, that *no man knew*; no, not "the angels of heaven: but his FATHER ONLY." Exhortation, therefore, connected with such a truly interesting subject, demands your earnest attention.

"Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." Observe here, my brethren, a faithful picture of human nature. Vice triumphs, and virtue suffers herself to be led captive at her chariot-wheels. Let us inquire into the causes of this hapless event.

First, we form erroneous opinions both of vice and of virtue. Secondly, our love is of a cold and fickle nature. Thirdly, we look for final and complete rewards in a transitory and imperfect state. In regard to the *first* position it requires but a limited experience of the world to shew the fallacy of those opinions which lead us to expect the immediate downfal of vice, and as sudden a remuneration of virtue. Iniquity, in this state of probation, must, of necessity, abound: not barely exist, but flourish and abound: because she wants not accomplices and abettors: because, go where you will—travel in parts near or remote—mix in society vulgar or refined—and there iniquity meets you. She is oftentimes the distributor of favour, and the arbitress of

merit. Since she poisoned the ear of Eve, she has pervaded and corrupted the hearts of her children. The world is full of her, and her career is high and inviting. To suppose that she *barely exists*, is to suppose what the evidence of facts will not allow us to conclude.

As we form erroneous opinions of vice, or iniquity, so do we form the like fallacious ones of virtue. We err equally in extremes. As we fancy iniquity to be rarely seen, or of so abashed a nature, as, when seen, to be quickly discomfited; so, on the other hand, do we believe virtue, or love, or Christian goodness, (for these are synonymous terms in a consideration of the words of the text,) to be every where abundant: that every smile is the smile of goodness, and every offer the offer of love. A very little knowledge (as was before observed) of human nature, checks the ardor of our fancy, and controls the exercise of our judgment in this particular. We quickly find that virtue is a plant of slow and delicate growth; that she loves not the glare of sunshine, but the retirement of shade; that she chuses her situation in quiet and sheltered recesses, and there brings forth blossom and fruit in silence: that the dews of

heaven fall gently upon her; and, that when of mature and perfect growth, she no longer requires such secrecy and delicacy of treatment, but comes forth in the world; is seen, is admired, and loved, and caressed, for her own pure intrinsic excellence and beauty.

It follows then, my brethren, as a conclusion to this first branch of our discourse, that we form erroneous opinions, in our outset of life, respecting iniquity and love, or vice and virtue; and that the *latter*, the more she is opposed to the *former*—the more love comes in contact with iniquity—and fairly and resolutely meets her, face to face, the more certainly will she vanquish her assailant, and cause her to hide her head in shame. It is the folly of even many (in other respects) worthy characters in society—who know that their principles are sound, and their conduct is correct—that they either compromise with iniquity, or suffer it to make a hollow truce with virtue, or to encroach upon its domain; or, that they have not the courage manfully and steadily to meet her:—which brings us directly to the *second* head of consideration; namely, that "our love is fickle and cold."

The love, inculcated by our blessed Saviour, is of the purest and most permanent nature;

a love, which like charity, believeth, hopeth, endureth all things; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth. It is nurtured by humility, contrition, and sweetness of disposition; by a cautious and even suspicious estimate of its own merits; measuring, step by step, every advance towards perfection; knowing man's heart to be corrupt; and placing a guard at every avenue leading to, and returning from, it: cherished in retirement, but not in ascetic seclusion; neither officiously active, nor unproductively supine. Like the grain of mustard-seed, small in its original shape, it multiplies and enlarges. There is always something, and much, for an affectionate and virtuous soul to be engaged in: its own innate depravities are first rooted out, and a strong confidence upon the God of all mercies is the natural result of this wholesome self-examination. Christian love then grows and gathers strength as it mingles with the world, and is opposed to iniquity. Respect, admiration, confidence, are her attendants. She is a tower of strength to the timid, and a scourge of correction to the reprobate. Partaking of her divine original, she scatters awe among the dissolute, and causes the coward to tremble. Will any serious, re-

flecting man deny this? Will he say, that vice and wickedness, (or iniquity, as our Saviour calls it,) is not confounded and abashed before virtue? Will all the artificial and desultory attempts of the most prosperous career in sin, embolden its votary to meet the man of virtue, of love, of honesty, and christian confidence, and say to him, "get thee behind me?" Where and when was there ever found profligacy, of hardihood sufficient to adopt so decided a tone? It is no where to be found. No mortal, however triumphant in iniquity, can successfully oppose the calm, steady, and winning course of virtue. Our eyes, and hands, and hearts, go instinctively with the latter; and, however they may wish you to believe the *contrary*, the iniquitous and wicked cannot but acknowledge in their *hearts* her transcendant empire.

And now, my brethren, having thus described what virtue is—or what the love, inculcated by our Saviour, undoubtedly was—it remains to be seen whether any of us, here assembled, have the consolation of thinking that our own virtue, or christian love, assimilates to that just described. Ask your hearts, whether they have waxed cold in the cause of your Saviour—and, let me add, of your own

everlasting salvation—when you have seen iniquity abound? Ask yourselves, how often you have hesitated, resolved, and re-resolved —doubted of the force and utility of virtuous principles, or a virtuous education, when you have seen the career of vice long continued, and hitherto successful? "Ah!" you have exclaimed, "to what purpose have my parents and guardians, and pastors and masters, and my own maturer reflections, all aided in instilling into me the vital principles of Christianity, and a constant reliance upon my God and Saviour—that all things in the end shall work together for my good—when I have daily evidence of the prosperity of those who walk in the counsel of the ungodly, stand in the way of sinners, and sit in the seat of the scornful? What will be the determination of all this? And to what yet further excruciating trial of patience are my faculties to be subjected?"—Does any virtuous bosom, in this serious assembly, feel emotions like unto these? If it does, let my illustration of the *third* and last head, or division, of this discourse, be in a great measure, if not entirely, both the accounting for, and the cure of, such a disease.

In the third place then, my brethren, it has

been observed to you, that we imagine *final* and *complete* rewards in a *transitory and imperfect* state of existence. This makes us sanguine, querulous, and dissatisfied. We not only do not consider virtue as its own reward, from the pure unadulterate pleasure resulting from the exercise of it—but, we look for a more marked and splendid remuneration, in the total cessation of vice, and a general homage paid to ourselves. Now this is exceedingly absurd. To indulge in conclusions similar to the foregoing, is both vain and heart-distressing. Virtue and christian love in this world must be *proved;* must encounter vice; and as gold is purified by the intensity of the heat of the furnace, so love gathers strength as she combats and resists wickedness. We were born for trouble; and a great part of this trouble is, the apparently prosperous course of iniquity. We entertain false and unworthy notions of the heavenly nature of love, if we think she can be weakened or diverted by the career of wickedness. In fact, we really do not possess virtue, if we are afraid of putting her into an active and efficient state. "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out *fear,* be-

cause fear hath torment. He that feareth, is not made perfect in love."

But admit that, after all our exertions, our virtuous intentions, and conduct of love, meet with repulse and scorn, and harassing oppositions. Still we must cherish it for virtue's sake. Still we must persevere in well doing. The better part of a Christian community will respect us; and, what is of far greater, and of inconceivably important consequence, the God of our creation, our Saviour and Redeemer, will keep an eye of care and never ceasing attention upon us; and, in the end, crown us with everlasting glory.

But, this *crown*, this *reward*, we neither shall, nor can, fully enjoy in the *present imperfect state of things*. It is the reward due to angels, and is reserved only for a state of blessedness.

Consider therefore, in conclusion, that the final end of all things, will be the final reward of virtue. Here, you must meet with sorrow and disappointment, and encounter iniquity. We fight the fight of a Christian, and work out our salvation with fear and trembling: not in ease, not in voluptuousness, not in the absence of care, and constant

supply and fruition of every thing which pampers our appetites, and inflames and gratifies our passion....No, my brethren; the warfare of a Christian can never be carried on in this manner with the remotest hope or chance of success. Iniquity will abound, but our love must not wax cold. Profligacy will be general; but our principles of virtue, of love, and of religion, must only be rooted the more deeply in proportion to such corruption. The tempest may assail, but must not shake us. And why?—the day of our Lord may be at hand. When the measure of human wickedness is complete, the punishment due to it will be dealt out. When we are ripe in sin, we shall be plucked and "cast into utter darkness."

By all, therefore, that is dear and sacred to Christians—by every plea, and from every consideration, which it has been the object of this imperfect discourse to supply—for the love you bear to those who are living—by your remembrance of the departed dead—if heaven be preferable to earth, and eternity of more awful interest than time—by such motives, and from such views and hopes, I entreat you, let not your love towards Christ "wax cold, because iniquity shall abound."

Consider, that at the moment of your wavering, when you think virtue and christian faith have been vain and profitless, the end of all things shall be at hand. The day of judgment has arrived. Your Saviour, as judge of the quick and the dead, comes to pass the final, irrevocable sentence. He looks for those whose faith has been fixed, and whose love deeply rooted in him. He separates the sheep from the wolves; his flock from the herd of Satan. You, who *ought* then to have "*boldness if your love be perfect,*" witness, in dread suspense, and with indescribable emotions, the awful scene that surrounds you....of which you are not to be only a beholder, but a *participator!*....Ah then, my brethren, if your love have not waxed cold; if, through all the struggles of life, occasioned in great part by the iniquity of others, you have been the constant, faithful, zealous, and merciful disciples of your master; your hope shall be greater than your fears, and your expectation of heaven assuage the apprehensions of hell.

On your bended knees you will pray for salvation; and *love* and *faith* shall give energy to your prayer. "Think upon me, O my God, for good, concerning my stedfast

love towards thee, my pious confidence in thy mercy. Lord, pardon those transgressions which I know full well to have committed, and, for the sake of thy own merits, blessed Saviour, receive me into glory."

SERMON XVI.*

LUKE xvii. 17, 18.

And Jesus answering, said, were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.

THE circumstances which gave rise to this observation of our blessed Saviour, were briefly these. In his way to Jerusalem, passing through a village that lay in the midst of Samaria and Galilee, there met him "ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off. And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy upon us! And when he saw them, he said to them, Go, shew yourselves to the priests; and it came to pass, that as they went, they were cleansed. And *one* of them, when he saw that he was

* June, 1806.

healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God; and fell down on his face, at his feet, giving him thanks; and *he* was a *Samaritan. And Jesus answering, said, were there not* TEN *cleansed? but where are the* NINE? *There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger!* And he said unto him, arise, go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole."

From the conduct of the *nine* lepers, we see an exemplification of the basest ingratitude. The disease of leprosy with which they were afflicted, was, of all others, the most dreadful and loathsome; and, according to the various descriptions of it in the book of Leviticus, was so contagious as to infect even garments and houses. From the definition of the *original* word, which we have translated leprosy, it appears to have been a *cutaneous disease,* appearing in *thin white scales,* either on the whole, or only some part of the body, and usually attended with violent irritation and pain. The various symptoms of this ravaging distemper, (which was a striking emblem of sin both original and actual) may be seen in the thirteenth and fourteenth chapters of Leviticus; where may be also read the legal ordinances con-

cerning it; which, as on the one hand they set forth how odious sin is to God, so, on the other, they represent the cleansing of our pollutions by the sacrifice and resurrection of Christ—by the sprinkling and application of his blood—by the sanctifying and healing influences of the holy spirit on all our powers and faculties.

Having thus some idea of the *nature* of this baneful disease, we are the better enabled to form an opinion of the comforts and blessings which must have attended its *cure*. A consideration this, which, one would think, must have forcibly impressed itself upon the minds of the lepers; and caused every one of them, prostrate on their faces, to glorify God with a loud voice and a grateful heart! But what was the case?—and what the conduct of these ungrateful and contemptible men?

As soon as they *saw* our blessed Saviour, they cried out in the most pitiful strain of supplication...." Jesus, Master! have mercy on us!" As much as if they had said, " We beseech thee, O gracious and powerful Jesus, to cleanse us from this dreadful disease. Restore to us our lost comforts of bodily health; and cause us no longer to be objects of horror to others, and a source of extreme wretch-

edness to ourselves!" We may, I think, readily conceive that their entreaty was sincere and vehement; and that an earnest hope and desire to be healed, expressed itself in every attitude and gesticulation.

It seems they had no sooner made the supplication, than our Saviour, resolving not to inform them explicitly, by *direct words*, that they should be healed—but wishing to afford a new and extraordinary testimony of his power of working miracles—says to them, "Go and shew yourselves to the Priests; and it came to pass, that *as they went they were cleansed.*" Admirable and astonishing as was the cure, it seems to have had no effect upon nine out of the ten. *One*, however, did feel some "compunctious visitings of nature." One, at least, possessed a heart that was not insensible of kindnesses and mercies bestowed. One did condescend to return, and fall down, and glorify God. His return naturally suggested to our Saviour, that, as the cure was equally extended to *all*, all should have returned to give thanks; for an acknowledgment of a favor conferred costs nothing. This, however, was not the case; and our Saviour, struck with the base ingratitude of the others, turns round and observes to his

followers—"Were there not *ten* cleansed, but where are the *nine?* There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger." Then addressing himself to the grateful stranger, he says, "go thy way, thy faith hath made thee whole."

Such being the illustration of the circumstances which attended the curing of these lepers, let us now, by God's assistance, endeavour to profit by the reflections that may be made therefrom.

And first, my brethren, do we not, at the very commencement of this illustration, discover something which has a close affinity with ourselves? When we are afflicted with any malady, when we are visited by any misfortune, how naturally do we *look to heaven* for relief! How earnestly do we supplicate Almighty God for a deliverance from our troubles! Our hearts become then duly impressed with a sense of an all-gracious and succouring providence. Like the lepers, we immediately lift up our voices, and say, "Jesus, Master, have mercy upon us!" Unable to bear the excruciating tortures of bodily pain, we ardently call for ease and mitigation. The heart sinks and is sad under accumulated affliction; and on the bed of bodily or mental

disease, we look up, with streaming eyes, towards that all-gracious source which visits only to heal, and which pours the balm of resignation into a tortured spirit. Perhaps it pleases God to remove our calamity. Perhaps he commands the infirmity, which had baffled medicinal art, to depart from us.... and we are whole, and restored to our wonted health and vigor.

Let us now remark, whether any *future* conduct, observable in the lepers, be applicable to ourselves. Having supplicated for, and received, relief, as they did, do we or do we not "*return and give glory to God?*" Are we disposed to look not on our cure—but to consider it as a mere matter of course; and thus heedlessly go on and mingle in our former pursuits, unconscious of the blessings which have been so recently and so wonderfully wrought upon us?

What would be the general answer, which, upon a wide acquaintance with the world, a candid and discerning moralist would make? Out of *ten* portions into which human beings may be divided, would not *nine* of those ten be found "wanting in giving glory to God?" Assuredly, says the wise and accurate observer, this would be the case. Though we

are all afflicted with the leprosy of *sin*, we are almost all unwilling to acknowledge the goodness of that divine power, which has sometimes snatched us from the gulf of perdition over which we hung, or from the jaws of sensuality and criminal passion into which we were headlong running as devoted victims. Gracious God....how wonderful and how benignant are thy ways and judgments! Thou penetratest the flimsy mist that envelopes and darkens our eyes; and from flattering and seductive pursuits, thou dost oftentimes turn us, in order to restore us to the sunshine of that peace, which passeth all human comprehension. In how many ways, and with what overflowing measures, hast thou visited *us* as thou didst the lepers of old? And in how many instances have *we* acted like those ungrateful objects of thy visitation?

Consider, I beseech you, the various manners in which we receive a cure for our sinful infirmities: and, first, onsider the aim and end of our being—and what God hath done for our eternal salvation.

Ask the traveller, who journeys towards his home; who presses onward, regardless of the obstacles in his way, to embrace the beloved partner of his happiness, and the dear chil-

dren of his bosom, who, for many a long day, have not been comforted by his presence. Ask him, though the road be rugged, and his limbs weak, and his strength diminished from long fatigue—ask him whether he will stop before he reaches his dwelling—the dwelling where all his bliss is concentrated? No!—he will press forward, unmindful of such temporary impediments; nor relax his efforts till he has arrived at the threshold of his home. *Then,* he thanks God for having thus far protected him; then he puts up the prayer of *gratitude,* of joy, and thanksgiving. And what is this, my brethren, but a picture of ourselves? Are not *we* all hastening towards our *long home?*—and has not God procured us immortality and life, through the mediation of his Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ? Should we not, therefore, consider *this life* but as the period destined for our journey to the next? And, knowing the comforts that await us for well-doing, should we not view it as the home where every happiness resides? Can we murmur at the *temporary* obstructions in the road? Are we so weak or so wicked as to refuse to the author and finisher of our faith, the heartfelt tribute of gratitude and praise? For, without our *redemption,* to what a gloomy

and dreadful home should we be hastening? Let us, therefore, be *grateful*, like the stranger and Samaritan in the text, for this first and chief miracle wrought upon us all—*Salvation through Jesus Christ!*

In a thousand other instances we are called upon to shew our gratitude to God. When we have slept through the night, and enjoyed the comforts of repose—when we awake to partake of the necessary business or recreation of the day, and when we live through that day to enjoy again the slumber of the night, we are equally called upon to bless our Creator and Redeemer. Alas, we little know the distribution of human events! The ungrateful man does not reflect that he may this evening close his eyes in this world, and awake in the world to come. We are here to-day....to-morrow we may have passed into *eternity*. On these accounts, therefore, be *grateful*—pray to God, in remembrance of the comforts you have already received, and entreat him to sustain you in every future calamity and affliction.

How boundless is the theme of gratitude! As members of a civilised community we should be grateful that our lot has been cast on *such a ground*. Our domestic repose cannot be invaded with impunity, our dearest

rights cannot be torn from us without ample redress and remuneration. Our relatives, our friends, our fondest ties and connexions may all, unassailed by tyrannical power, and unviolated by savage brutality, "grow up with our growth, and strengthen with our strength"....may all sit beneath the same porch, and enjoy the fruits of the same vine! Unlike those hapless regions where murder stalks abroad in open day; where rapine, and lust, and revenge, tear away the dearest privileges, and trample beneath their feet the most sacred rights; where social comfort is unknown, civilization uninculcated, and where the Gospel of heaven has not shed its hallowed light! In *such* a state, life is an ocean of perpetual agitation and storm; terminated by no friendly harbor; without compass to direct, or star to illumine! That YOU live not in *such a state,* and in *such countries,* be grateful to that Being who has placed you upon these happy shores.

Lastly, my brethren, look round you even *at home,* and see and believe what cause you have of gratitude and thanksgiving towards God. Education has enlightened your mind, and taught you the excellency of moral conduct. You hear, read, and understand God's

holy word; and you peruse, with delight and instruction, those works of genius and goodness which meliorate the heart while they expand the intellect. You have also had *virtuous parents*, who have instructed you in the way you should go: or it has pleased heaven, by blessing the fruits of your well directed industry, to crown your maturer years with competency and ease:—in short you have, what are properly called, many earthly comforts; and for all these things will you not be *grateful?* If large earthly possessions can only be obtained by large sums of money, which are in general very cheerfully paid, surely the comforts of heaven may be acknowledged by grateful words flowing from a grateful heart! Such terms cannot be too dear for purchasing the favor of Almighty God.

When reclining at ease in your own hospitable mansions, or in those of your friends, will you not thank God that he has thus sheltered you from want?—thus sheltered you from the keen blast of the tempest, which falls upon the head of the poor, homeless, heart-broken fellow-creature, who weeps and perishes in the storm? Is there nothing due to heaven for an exemption from such misery

and distress? Does the naked and famished beggar, the weeping and deserted orphan, the child of other and better days, the victim of melancholy or madness, suggest no reflections to your mind of a grateful and benevolent nature? But, alas! let us not further probe the miseries of human existence, nor explore every dungeon in which wretchedness and despair reside.

It is sufficient for us, if, in this partial estimate of human woes, we learn to bless God Almighty for all his goodness, and "all the wonders he hath wrought for the children of men!" But, above all, "for his inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace and for the hope of glory." Let us, therefore, depart—not like the ungrateful lepers in the parable; but like the pious female, who only asked permission to pick up the crumbs which fell from our Saviour's table, and who was abundantly grateful, because she knew them to be the bread of immortal life!

"O all ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord, praise him and magnify him for ever!

"O ye CHILDREN OF MEN, bless ye the Lord, praise him and magnify him for ever!"

SERMON XVII.

II. PETER, iii. 11.

*Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be, in all holy conversation and godliness?**

THESE emphatic words relate to the dissolution of the world, at the day of judgment; a dissolution, which the Apostle, in a few verses preceding the text, supposes will be effected by fire, as a contrast to the first dissolution by water. Whatever be the nature of this second dissolution, the subject is in itself so awful and so impressive, that we ought not, for a moment, to suffer our attention to be diverted from an elucidation of it.

"The day of the Lord," says St. Peter, in the verse immediately preceding the text, "will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a

* July, 1808.

great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up."

This is very powerful language; exciting the reflections of the wise, and commanding the attention of the volatile. The awful day of judgment will come suddenly, unexpectedly, and scattering fear and dismay as a midnight robber; all our senses will be awakened; the vital faculties will be excited and agitated to an unusual degree; and the simile of the thief in the night is exceedingly striking, as descriptive of that surprise and terror which usually accompany the intrusions of a nightly robber. What will follow all this alarm, and to what further object is our attention to be directed? The heavens are then to pass away with a great noise; louder, probably ten thousand times louder, than the thunder which rolls from pole to pole—this will be followed by a dissolution of the earth —of all that beautiful, fruitful, and delightful globe, which human beings inhabit—this earthly scene is to melt away in consequence of intently fervent heat: and all vegetation, all fruits, and fields, and mountains, and forests that are therein, shall be burned up.

This is the scope of the Apostle's descrip-

tion of the last day; and having so impressively described it, he very naturally asks his christian brethren what manner of persons they ought to be, in all holy conversation and godliness, seeing that the world is finally to be so dissolved.

A question this, my brethren, which every sincere pastor most earnestly puts to that flock about whose spiritual welfare he is solicitous. Seeing that such will be the termination of all things, what manner of persons ought we *all* to be, in our conversations, in our devotions, and in our demeanor through life?

When a serious and reflecting man looks attentively upon the great stream of human existence as it glides by him; or, in language unmetaphorical, considers attentively the opinions, professions, conduct of the greater part of mankind—what are the conclusions which he must, I fear, inevitably draw from such a contemplation? When he sees thoughtlessness, dissipation (refined down to the softer term of a *social feeling*), wantonness, and intemperance, among the lighter vices—and avarice, envy, revenge, and murder, among the blacker vices—that mark the human character, will he not naturally exclaim—"Are

these the superior beings whom God hath gifted with reason to distinguish them from brutes? Are these the superior beings for whom he hath, moreover, in his infinite goodness and mercy, vouchsafed the blessings of salvation by the death of his only begotten and beloved Son? And is it for the everlasting happiness of *such* thoughtless and irrational creatures, that the joys of heaven could only be obtained by the atoning blood of a Redeemer? Is it possible that a world, so giddy and gone astray, can ever have been made acquainted with an hereafter, *a day of judgment*, and the awful signs which the Apostle tells them will surely be its forerunner or attendant? No—*these* cannot be creatures for whom redemption and a celestial paradise have been proffered. It is preposterous and insane to suppose that enlightened beings can act as *these* act—who daily hurl defiance, as it were, towards that throne, before which, on their bended knees, and as penitent suppliants, they ought to present themselves as inheritors of the kingdom of heaven!"

My brethren, you yourselves are to judge whether the conclusions which I have assigned to a pious and reflecting character, on a view

of the conduct of the greater part of mankind, be correct and just, or not. If the picture be distorted, or the colouring overcharged, fortunate will it be for us—who cannot but sympathise with the present and probable future lot of that society in which we daily move.

But whether these observations apply or not to our *fellow-creatures*, it will be readily discovered whether they become applicable to *ourselves*. When we read and reflect upon the Apostle's awful description of the last day, and listen to the exhortation which he immediately subjoins, let us ask our own consciences *what manner of persons* we are, and in what manner of discourse we have indulged —whether our conduct has been virtuous, and whether our conversation has been godly? This, it is in the power of every rational being to put in practice: and happy surely is he, whose heart condemns him not, and who has confidence in this particular towards God. He is happy in the fullest acceptation of the term; because he has thereby attained the great object for which life and the light of revelation have been granted him.

The heathen moralists and poets used to urge men to virtuous deeds, by painting, in

vivid colors, the joys of an Elysium of which they were to partake hereafter; and in proportion to this excitation, was the opposite one which arose from describing the horrible tortures of the infernal regions—But no mode of obtaining happiness was, of course, pointed out by the intercession of a divine mediator. The heathen was left to act virtuously or not, just as his own incitements might operate. Now it is not so with Christians. We have, it is true, the happiness of heaven, and the miseries of hell, depicted; but we have also the consoling assurances that a SAVIOUR is sitting down at the right hand of his Father, to make intercession for our manifold sins. And yet this alone, without a strenuous effort on our part, without a zealous and conscientious discharge of our duties to God and man, will not obtain for us the desired happiness of another world. No: we are naturally depraved by sin; we are the slaves and the victims of a thousand dark passions, that hurry us from one rebellious act to another; and it is for the trial of such, that the last day, with all its awful train of events, is fixed in the calendar of heaven. It is for those who talk of grace and faith with their lips only, but are not touched by it in their

hearts—who discourse largely and make professions freely, but who stir not one finger or foot in consequence—that a day is appointed for the punishment of the wicked.

How scrupulous therefore should we be, seeing this day will come to pass, that our conduct be perfectly guarded, and perfectly free from any of the foregoing imputations. We must thoroughly and in earnest repent, and put aside those sins which so easily beset us. And in order to accomplish this salutary object, let our conversation, according to the Apostle's injunction, be correct and *godly*.

"Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh"—and more than one half the wretchedness which we see abroad in the world, is the result of *seductive and wicked discourse*. It is quite madness to say that we mean well, and that our actions are generous and noble, when our conversation is light and vicious. Look at the greater number of those objects for which social intercourse is instituted—and let the lover of wisdom and of virtue write down the language that flows from the tongue of man. To what does it amount? How vain, how empty, how frivolous, and in too many instances, how criminal, is the discourse of those

whose minds have been refined by education, and whose principles are professed to have been regulated by gospel precepts! What is there in all this, let me ask, that savors of those principles, and that discourse, invariably exemplified in our Saviour's conduct? What is there too, in all this, that looks as if it arose among those—for whom a *day of judgment* is reserved, and who are tremblingly to witness the dissolution of the world, and may probably call upon the mountains to cover them?

Do not, my beloved brethren, do not let us be deceived. Evil communications corrupt *principles* as well as *manners;* and when we meet together for the indulgence of what is called *social conversation,* let it be something like that which might be expected of rational beings and Christians, formed in the heavenly image of their Creator.

But whatever may be the frivolity and ungodliness of our usual conversation, let us set apart *some* seasons; let us, at least, reserve *one* day in *seven*—for the indulgence of that discourse which is connected with things above, and with our future destiny in another world. The idle, the wanton, the flippant, and the ignorant, may call this interchange of thoughts and expressions, the re-

sult of a weak or of an enthusiastic mind; but, surely, if we are exhorted to approach our Heavenly Father in the strain of prayer, and with pious sentiments, who shall condemn us for being rational among ourselves "in all holy conversation and godliness?" If we can be ridiculed out of proper *conversation*, we may be ridiculed out of proper *conduct;* and those who are thus weak in bending, like the suppliant osier, to every breath that blows, will, in the end, become hardened in crime, when they imagine themselves only occasionally irregular in discourse.

If we have any regard for our own credit or reputation; if we affix any meaning, or any importance to Scriptural truths; if we believe in any future state, and in a day of judgment;—let us, for God's sake, have some respect to our words, our sentiments, and our actions. Do not let us lay the unction of flattery to our souls, and sooth ourselves with shallow conceits, vain surmises, and frivolous reflections. As the imparting of our sentiments to each other, through the medium of certain sounds which are called discourse, or *conversation*, is not only one of the principal qualifications, and most distin-

guished attributes and comforts which mark the human character; so let it be, at all times, our bounden duty to order this conversation *aright*; to consider that from thoughts, words —and from words, actions flow; and that it must necessarily be one of the most exquisite of earthly gratifications, to attemper our language and our sentiments to the beautiful propriety, and divine truth, of gospel precepts.

In man all is fickle and evanescent. The ebullitions of our minds are too frequently characterised by vain or wicked conceits. We are the dupes of flattery; and, for the applause and gratification of a day, will not sometimes scruple to sacrifice our best feelings and purest notions at the shrine of artifice and interest. Our *conversations* naturally partake of this criminal inconsistency; and falsehood and voluptuousness are the glaring features of these our oral communications. But, if we consider to what bourne we are journeying; if we consider with what high capacities we are endued; and that it should be the boast of human wisdom to work out our salvation with fear and trembling—what "manner of persons ought we to be?" and how guarded and circumspect in our conversation with each other!

Consider, I beseech you, in conclusion, that in a few revolving years, or months, or days, the period of earthly trial will, with some of us, have been terminated. Death will have closed our eyes, and sealed our tongues: and what is to render our final moments easy, and calm, and happy? What conversation is *then* to flow from our lips—to sooth the anxieties and hush the throbbings of those who love us dearly, and who wait in fond, but awful suspense, for the testimony of a dying Christian?

He shall then speak comfort to our hearts, who, when in the vigor of health and full enjoyment of life, always opened his lips to instruct and to edify. *He* shall then admonish us to look forward with hope, who uniformly told us to be stedfast in well doing; to "stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord." It is from the tongue of a seraph, as *his* will then be, that we are, at such an awful crisis, to look for consolation, and piety, and wisdom. No imprecations, no wailings of despair, no bursts of impatience, mark the end of that man who hath *ordered his conversation aright*, and kept his heart in perfect unison with the solemn injunctions of the Apostle.

The day of judgment, and the convulsive

groans of expiring nature, alarm not the heart of such a man: for he discerns, amidst these awful phenomena, that celestial spirit which is coming to animate and to purify his soul....that angel, the messenger of the Most High, who shall lead him to drink of the pure waters of everlasting life and felicity.

That this may be the ultimate and happy lot of every one here assembled, God of his infinite mercy grant through the merits of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord!

SERMON XVIII.

II. SAMUEL, xviii. 33.

*And the King was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, "O my son, Absalom; my son, my son, Absalom! Would [to] God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!**

THESE are the mournful words of a tender father upon the death of a beloved son. Seldom has grief been more touchingly delineated than in the picture which the circumstances described by the holy writer, in the previous verses, represent to our imagination and reflection. In truth, human life hath fewer bitter occurrences attending it than the cutting asunder of those ties which connect a CHILD with its PARENT; and my

* September, 1809.

purpose shall be, in this discourse—after describing to you the whole circumstances which led to the slaughter of Absalom, and dwelling a little upon the heart-touching sorrow of his father—to state, that, however severely any of us might feel a similar loss, yet, *we* should not, as David appears to have done, sorrow as men without hope; since it hath pleased Almighty God, in his infinite goodness, to have vouchsafed unto us that testament of his will, which was sealed by the blood of his son; for in this testament we are told, that, though in Adam we must all die, yet, in Christ, we shall hereafter be made alive, and meet again.

First, then, we will describe the circumstances which led to the premature end of Absalom. In the fifteenth chapter of the same book from which my text is taken, we perceive that Absalom had been guilty of one of the most atrocious acts which a son can commit against the repose of his father: I mean, *disloyalty* and *rebellion*. He was absolutely in arms against David; and we find that the latter said "unto all his servants that were with him at Jerusalem: Arise, and let us flee: for we shall not else escape from Absalom: make speed to depart

lest he overtake us suddenly, and bring evil upon us, and smite the city with the edge of the sword." After this alarming circumstance, we find that David was absolutely compelled to tarry in a place afar off, "lest the wrath of his son should endanger his life."

Notwithstanding this flagrant breach of duty, a reconciliation seems to have taken place; for at the opening of the eighteenth chapter, it is manifest that David was anxious to make an accurate and splendid display of his forces; and not only to give Absalom a very important command in the army, but to go himself to the battle. His people, however, who were anxious about his safety, and the danger which might ensue to the kingdom if any accident should befal him, importune him not to go. But the people answered, "Thou shalt not go forth: for if we flee away they will not care for us—neither if half of us die will they care for us—but now *thou* art worth *ten thousand of us*; therefore now it is better that thou succor us out of the city." The king listened to this solicitation with great attention; and tacitly assenting to its propriety, immediately exclaimed—"What seemeth you best I will do." "And the king stood by the gate side,

and all the people came out by hundreds and by thousands."

David, in fact, took an open situation in front of the troops as they passed by him; to observe their order, their enthusiasm, and to sooth his own mind, (as he was prevented from going to fight in person) with the strong hope of victory which such a well appointed army held out. It was a considerable gratification, no doubt, for a warlike monarch to enjoy this sight....but another and a more interesting object occupied his attention and clung round his heart. His BELOVED SON, ABSALOM, was among them; and the *father* was doubly anxious to take a farewell view of his *child.* As the soldiers therefore passed by him in their ranks, and as we may suppose the young, heroic Absalom came in sight, the king turned round to his principal officers, Joab, Abithai, and Ittai, and said, "Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom. And all the people heard when the king gave all the captains charge concerning Absalom."

The sacred writer takes care to impress upon us, how solemnly and how publicly David expressed his concern, and gave a particular charge about the conduct of his son.

After this, the important battle was fought in the wood of Ephraim, where we are told that the enemy was vanquished with the slaughter of twenty thousand men.

To return to David. With a mind deeply absorbed in reflections upon the probable fate of his son; and, after taking his last look of him, with eyes suffused with tears, he went slowly and mournfully to take his station between two gates:—appointing a watchman to go up to the roof over the gate unto the wall, and to lift up his eyes, and tell him if any body came with tidings from the field of battle. This little incident is beautifully introduced by the writer, in order that the reader's mind may more fully enter into the agitated feelings of the father, and receive, with him, the tidings of Absalom's death in a more solemn and affecting manner.

I will not dwell upon the base and atrocious assassination of this young man by the treacherous Joab: who, taking advantage of an unexpected disaster while his hair was entangled in the branches of a tree—and who, perhaps not having the courage to try his skill with him face to face, and upon equal terms of combat—"took three darts in his hand, and thrust them through the heart of

Absalom, while he was yet alive in the midst of the oak." Ten of his armor-bearers, upon this signal, compassed him about, and basely smote him, and slew him.

Meanwhile, the king received intelligence from the watchman on the tower, that two men were running apace towards him. The agitated monarch had hardly received this intelligence, when they arrived. The king instantly interrogates each, as they come in order, about the fate of his son. The first tells him that he saw a tumult where Absalom was, but knew not what it was. He is then told by David to stand aside, and make way for *Cushi*, who appears to have betrayed unusual marks of agitation in his countenance. The distracted monarch addresses him in a manner as if his heart foreboded the most serious ill. "And behold Cushi came, and Cushi said, Tidings my Lord the King, for the Lord hath avenged thee this day of all them that rose up against thee. And the king said unto Cushi, Is the young man Absalom safe?" The answer of Cushi can never be too much admired for its delicacy as well as force. "And Cushi answered, The enemies of my Lord the King, and all that

rise against thee to do thee hurt, be as that young man is."

This was quite sufficient for the susceptible mind of David. The fatal blow, which he had so much dreaded, was now struck; and the narrative, without stopping to tell us of any particular exclamation of David to Cushi, informs us, in the words of the text, that "the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept; and as he went he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son; would to God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

So ends the narrative connected with the death of Absalom, and the effect of that death upon the mind of his father David: an effect, which it is not in the power of language adequately to describe. When a parent, in the situation of David, (or indeed in *any* situation) finds himself thus deprived of a dear and promising son—when dreadful disaster, or a cruel and premature end, cuts off from us those round whom the feeble arms of age hang for support,—when we see this idolised object of our affection stretched out a lifeless corse, and covered with those wounds which treachery and cruelty have inflicted upon him—what

are our reflections? . . . or, rather, what must have been those of the susceptible David? If his beloved son had been borne to him on the funeral bier, covered with the wounds which he had bravely sustained *from the enemy*, in fighting the battles of his country—some consolation, some small spark of patriotic joy, might have been kindled in the sensible bosom of the parent! But no—there was no feeling of this nature which served to sustain his sinking soul. His beloved Absalom had fallen by the very hands of *those*, to whose charge, before the face of all the people, he had been so solemnly *entrusted*. His agony, therefore, is insupportable. He withdraws from the face of his attendants; he weeps aloud and bitterly: and he, even, in communion with his God, wishes that it had pleased the Almighty to have taken *him* in the stead of his *son!*

From this conduct of David, let us, my beloved brethren, as the latter part of this discourse, and agreeably to the intimation thrown out at the commencement of it, draw such conclusions as may be profitable to ourselves, and administer to us some little consolation should it ever be our lot to be afflicted with a *similar calamity*.

To indulge in heart-felt sorrow on the loss of those whom we have long and tenderly loved, is both natural and commendable in man. Jesus wept on the death of Lazarus: and we too have wept, or shall weep, when we are left desolate without the child of our bosom. Although in the natural course of things, our own dissolutions will precede those of our children; yet, God Almighty, who is pleased to try the christian fortitude of parents, for the benefit of their surviving children, sometimes imposes upon them a severe and heart-breaking task. When we are doomed to follow these young, and innocent, and endeared objects to their long home; when the common order of mortality is thus inverted; it is, perhaps, of all afflicting scenes in this afflicting world, the most poignant and insupportable to endure! Like David, we shun the face of day, and of human beings; we retire to our chamber; and weep and wish that heaven had taken us instead of our child—"Would to God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

But, my brethren, there is a period, there are occasions, when lamentation of this kind is both absurd and unchristian-like to indulge in to excess. Our *surviving* relatives demand

of us the usual attentions, and the usual intercourse, which, while they sweeten human life, tend to our own comfort and cure; and what is more essential to bear in mind, both the letter and spirit of the GOSPEL inculcate on us the necessity of "not sorrowing as men without hope." When our Saviour said, "Let the dead bury the dead," he intimated, that the living was of more importance than the dead; and that he, who by his advice and example, had contributed to the correction of human errors, and the rooting out of sin from the heart of man, had thereby snatched him from *that* state, which made him "*dead while he lived.*"

No doubt, on these mournful deprivations, we are at first but little calculated to become monitors or correctors of the living. Our imaginations, our very hearts are carried into the image of the deceased; and seem, for a while, to sleep with him in the sepulchre! But heaven has most wisely and humanely suffered this period of abstraction and suffering to be as short as it is poignant. A dear surviving object, or the necessary business of human life, or, what I would rather believe, the *spiritual comfort of the Gospel,* calms by degrees our mental distractions; checks our

irregular sallies, and pours a soft and exhilarating sunshine upon the mind, which before was covered with a dreary and appalling darkness.

Indeed, we must all set out in life with the conviction of inevitably meeting with our mortal ends. Let it be then our duty to meet death, as it respects *ourselves*, with the fortitude which becometh one, for whom a prospect of immortal life has been opened by the atonement of the son of God. Does it take from us our *child?* Heaven takes it to itself; and who so tender a father as the Maker of the Universe? "He shall not come to us, but we shall go to him!" Can this language ever make a Christian despondent? Ought it to make us indifferent to human life, or negligent of our attentions and serious duties, which, as long as that life is given to us, we have invariably to perform?

Let me conclude then with addressing those, who, like David, may have wished to die instead of their children, to restrain such irregular feelings—and to put a sober and proper construction upon every event which a mysterious and awful Providence inflicts upon a suffering world.

It must be by a firm, and never to be sha-

ken, belief in the power and promises of the Godhead, and in the efficacy and atonement of the Redeemer, that we must endeavour to walk circumspectly and uprightly from the cradle to the grave. Arrived at the brink of the latter, the resigned and intrepid Christian thus addresses those who are within the circle of his hearing—

"Listen to me, ye mortals, for I was young and am now old. My aged head has bowed over the loss of a wife whom I loved, and of a *son* in whom was all my boast and joy! I have seen the wicked prosper, and the children survive the parents of the wicked; but, in spite of my apparent misfortunes, and their prosperity, I would not meet death, and thus drop unseen into the dark gulf before me, with *other* feelings than those which it pleases God *now* to give me. Every thing in the end hath worked together for my good:—my irritabilities have been softened by grief, and misfortune has taught me to seek succor alone under the healing wings of that *Gospel*, which, till then, was a stranger to my heart. My resignation on the loss of those whom I have thus tenderly loved, may, probably, be written down in *that book* where no good deed is registered in vain. In proportion to

the sincerity of my feelings, will be my happiness hereafter: and I bow to the fate which awaits me, with the confidence of a Christian who has learnt and practised one of the most difficult of all lessons—that of *temperance and forbearance!*"

May a voice like this whisper peace and resignation to each of you, when, like David, you are distracted with domestic afflictions: and may you be seriously impressed with a conviction, that the road which leads to DEATH, is also the road which leads to EVERLASTING LIFE AND FELICITY!

SERMON XIX.

ST. JOHN, viii. Part of v. 32.

*The truth shall make you free.**

THESE words were spoken by Jesus Christ, in a dialogue with certain of the Jews, who surrounded him, and endeavoured by the multiplicity and subtilty of their questions to ensnare him in his discourse. The dialogue, from the import of the 20th verse, in the same chapter, appears to have been carried on in the treasury, as our Saviour taught in the temple. It was a very remarkable one; and gave rise to a variety of exclamations and conjectures among the unbelieving Jews, who terminated it by having recourse to an expedient, which even now is not uncommon in the case of obstinate and violent antagonists. "They took up stones to cast at him, but Je-

* September, 1808.

sus hid himself, and went out of the temple."* On the scope and tendency of the *entire* dialogue, which occupies hardly fewer than forty verses of the chapter, it would be barely possible, within the compass of a discourse, to make every necessary observation; but *that portion* of it, which is comprehended in the emphatic words of the text, it shall be my present object to enlarge and to enforce.

They may be truly called emphatic words. Most important indeed they are, my brethren, inasmuch as they tell us in what our *best freedom*, in what an emancipation from the most horrid slavery, consists. The truth shall make us free. The conviction of the purity, and integrity, and efficacy of the gospels of heaven, is to free us from the thraldom of heathenish superstition; is to exterminate all gross and perverted notions of God and his works; and, what is of still greater consequence, is to eradicate the lurking seeds of sin and sensuality from our bosoms. Such are the glorious objects to be accomplished—such is the vigorous freedom to be acquired from having the truth of God's word implanted in our hearts. Let us more particularly see how the subject affects us.

We all of us boast of our titles of *Christians*; and too many, I fear, look only to the mere title, without considering what duties it enjoins, and what virtues it implies. Suppose a sagacious heathen, or one of the sect with whom our Saviour conversed, thus to interrogate a Christian of this light denomination. "You call yourself a Christian; but are you a follower of Christ? do you endeavour to walk in his steps, to imitate his excellences, and to exhibit his patience and his fortitude? Are you a freedman according to the truth? that is, do you renounce sin and abhor vice, as your religion dictates; or is it only because you received the *denomination* of Christian at the baptismal font; that you arrogate to yourself a superiority over our sect?" Undoubtedly, there are many who live in the flutter of vanity, and in the vortex of dissipation, who would be startled by such a question. Undoubtedly, there are *too* many who have received the denomination of Christians by the Ministers of the Church, and in the usual ceremony of baptism, with their godfathers and godmothers—who, from the moment when they could, and ought to, think for themselves, have never cast one reflection upon the serious and ex-

cellent religion which they have professed: and yet such would exhibit symptoms of inward discontent, or even of outward rebellion, if they were to be denied the *freedom* which the *truth* of that religion holds out. But what are our Saviour's own words, as stated in the verses immediately preceding the text?—"If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed. And ye shall *know* the *truth*, and the truth shall make you free." So that here we clearly perceive, that to enjoy this freedom we must *know the truth*; and, in order to know the truth, we must *continue in Christ's word*, and thus become his disciples indeed.

So palpable and unerring are the injunctions of the Gospel, opposed to the subtleties and machinations of human creeds. The former tell us, if we wish to enjoy the truth, and the freedom to which it leads, that we must continue in the word of God—that is, we must not *profess* ourselves to be Christians only, nor must we act as *Christians to-day* and as *Heathens to-morrow*; but we must stedfastly and pertinaciously run the course which is set before us. There must be no backsliding, no lukewarmness, no fickleness; but a life uniformly devoted, and zealously

applied, to accomplish the great ends and purposes of our being; to shew peace and goodwill unto man, submission and unqualified resignation to heaven. This must be the trait of a Christian's character; for without it, his religion is but a mockery and a jest.

Does any one *doubt* of the superiority of the Gospel's precepts to secure us freedom? To what then would he refer us? To the systems of his fellow-creatures? To the idle jargon and absurd mysteries of the Pagan world? To the elaborate and contradictory definitions of virtue and of vice, of happiness and of misery, with which the *heathen creeds* abounded? or to the horrid and licentious conduct of those, who were sometimes venerated as heroes or worshipped as gods? No —these are too monstrous for present credulity to adopt. And yet to what *other* worldly sources are we to look for substantial freedom of spirit and body? What other friendly fires are to light us across the gloomy valley of speculation and doubt? The flimsy arguments and the unfeeling principles of *modern atheism or scepticism?* Or the hollow conclusions and specious promises of men, who have lived and died without hope, and without exhibiting the common ties of human sympathy?

Are *these* to form our succor and consolation in the fearful moment of doubt and despondency? Is it from the virtue which *such* maxims impart, that we are to rise, as it were, with the wings of freedom, and fly into the bosom of our God? Indeed, my brethren, it is *not* from such sources. Be assured it is not on such a ground that we are to build our tabernacles, and set up our everlasting rest. If we love freedom, if we love that *best* of all freedom, "*a death unto sin and a new birth unto righteousness,*" let us flee to the GOSPEL: let us continue in the word of Christ, and we shall be absolutely free, and his disciples indeed.

Human systems too often gloss over the very names and properties of things:—The Gospel assigns to every thing a correct definition. Here, we pilfer and applaud the act of robbery for its ingenuity. We plunder a family of its all, by taking from a parent, under the appellation of *fair play,* and a debt *honorably* incurred and to be discharged, that which would have nourished his numerous and innocent offspring. Now, what is there in the Gospel of Christ which sanctions this conduct? and what, I beseech you, is the nature of that *freedom* which the loser or the gainer enjoys? I forbear to wound your spirits by mentioning

either. May the dreadful *vice of gaming** be for ever a stranger to those whom it is my lot and happiness to address!

Again. Here the marriage-tie is broken, and the criminal appetites are indulged, as if these things formed a constituent part of a civilised society. Now the Gospel has most justly and solemnly told us to put away all concupiscence; and our Saviour himself says, "whoso looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed *adultery in his heart.*" Thus avowedly incompatible, upon these two subjects only, are the creeds of God and man: and look at the portion of *freedom*, of ease of conscience, which those enjoy who act up to the injunctions of these respective authorities. Can the man of the world say, the *obeying* of that world has made him *free?* Are no thorns planted in the pillow on which he would repose, and does he gratify his depraved appetites without causing the hearts of others to be wrung with agony and remorse? My brethren, draw the conclusion yourselves: for it is too obvious to need the pointing out in this place.

* See this subject eloquently and justly treated in a volume of Discourses by the present DEAN OF WINCHESTER.

Once more: in illustration of this part of the discourse—in shewing the superiority of the freedom which the Gospel holds out, compared with that of the world.

In evil-speaking, in lying and slandering, how easily do we find apologists for, as well as practisers of, these things among mankind? In the pursuit of pleasures the most frivolous and the most perishable, how readily do we discover the votaries of human wisdom! And what is the *freedom* which such pursuits impart? Where is the quiet mind, the satisfied conscience, the pure, yet animated feeling, alive to the best sensibilities of the heart, to be found in such a calling? But is the Gospel *divested* of all pleasurable pursuits? Does it render us only morose, and callous, and unfit for social intercourse? Turn over its pages; and see, on the contrary, how truly amiable, cheerful, and social are its precepts: not confined to the cell of the recluse, but to the objects of the most active member of society. Who visited more, and with purer feelings, than the founder of our religion? Who associated more with the world? Who seemed to live so entirely for the whole human race? and who, during his visits, whether in public or in private, ever caused the *hearts of so*

many to sing for joy? Such are the substantially pleasurable sensations which the Gospel will afford to every one who chuses to "continue in the word." It is in vain that we carp at its dictates; people who are obstinately bent upon shutting their eyes, or perverting their judgments, have no claim whatever to the characters of competent judges of Christianity.

Let us now describe more particularly the nature of that freedom held out in the Gospel; for having shewn that, according to mere *worldly* principles we cannot possibly enjoy a pure or permanent *liberty*, it behoves us to consider the nature of that liberty founded upon *Gospel truths*.

To a minute and candid observer, there is something exceedingly frank and unsophisticated in the language and precepts of Christ and of his apostles: carrying with them an air of the most genuine and encouraging simplicity. The lover of morals sees in how forcible a manner the best maxims of morality are inculcated. There is no palliating with sin. There is no temporising with human caprices and weaknesses: vice and shame are laid bare to the eye of the world, and vir-

tue and integrity are, in an equal degree, made public and applauded. The Gospel says plainly, that you must not compound with acts of turpitude and chicanery; that you must put away the sin which so easily besets you; that you are the slave of Satan, if you continue in evil doing; and that if you are alive to mere worldly pleasures, you are "*dead while you live!*" Thus strong and explicit are its decrees in regard to the moral order of things; and if we wish to obtain freedom in these things, we must attend to the *truths* which they impart. We must resolutely and entirely give our minds to the task; and rest assured, that in so doing, we shall in no wise lose our reward.

Now, as respects a *future state* of misery or of happiness, how clear, how strong, and how awful is the language of truth in the word of God! Things are not represented darkly, as through a glass; but, on the contrary, they are palpably developed, either in express terms, or by way of parabolical instruction. The day of judgment has been described both in simple and figurative language by Christ himself, and the Apostles who succeeded him; so that, in every respect, in every minute par-

ticular, an adherence to *truth*, to simplicity, and to integrity, is the grand leading characteristic of the Gospel.

Let us now, in conclusion, observe in what manner the *freedom*, grafted upon these *truths*, is to make us happy.

On the supposition that an intellectual human being would sacrifice the pleasures of the body to those of the mind; on the supposition that to leave behind a name distinguished for *wisdom* and *worth*, is preferable to one distinguished for *vanity* and *profligacy*, I draw the following conclusive remarks.

Here is one born in a lowly state; in limited circumstances, and receives what is called a confined education. Though doomed to the drudgery of daily labor, such an one, if he have a rational knowledge of the Gospel, and a sure and settled hope of immortality through the merits of Jesus Christ, such an one possesses *absolute freedom*, compared with another in circumstances the most exalted, but with a mind perfectly *uncultivated* and *callous* in christian knowledge. This inference may startle a man unaccustomed to consider the nature of that freedom which is connected with heavenly truths—and who has uniformly imagined, that liberty is the companion only

of voluptuousness and pomp; but the inference is nevertheless just—and a day will come when its force will be most acutely felt.

Again. Here a thousand untoward circumstances deprive us of property and friends. The mere *worldly* soul is chained down, as it were, to the oar of that slavery which worldly connexions impose. The punctiliousness of etiquette, the constrained homage paid to rank, unaccompanied by morality and decorum, affect a mind that has been accustomed to reverence *virtue* rather than *situation*—and doubly to reverence *both* when they are found in *unison!* Now the Gospels impose nothing of this restraint. They tell us very properly to pay tribute where tribute is due: to render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, but to God the things that are God's. A man, therefore, accustomed to form his principles, and regulate his conduct, exclusively on such a basis, is always free in mind, free in spirit, and free in action. You may confine him within the narrow limits of a dungeon; but his soul, which is daily and hourly communing with his Maker, can be confined by no earthly limits whatever. It ranges uncontroled over the wide regions of space; and in every star that glitters in the sky, and midst every re-

gion of the habitable globe, it wanders, not as a forbidden stranger, but as a welcomed guest.... for God Almighty upholds and comforts the creature!

See the groveling misery and contemptible slavery of the mere sons of men! The miser loses his treasure—what despair and anguish seize upon him! The man of power is frustrated in his designs, is discomfited, or forsaken—what fury and madness await him! The lover of pleasure is visited by sudden sickness or want—what melancholy preys upon his heart! The robber or the murderer is detected and imprisoned—what an ignominious end attends him! Thus you see these mere worldly characters fall victims to *slavery*, or the most incurable afflictions. But not so is it with *him* whom the truth of the GOSPEL hath made *free;* and whose soul is unsusceptible of these gross worldly affections. Chain his body down to servitude; let him toil in the sweat of his brow; let him be deprived of all domestic comforts; banish his family, extirpate his kindred, seize upon his patrimony, conduct him to the scaffold, and brand his name with every species of infamy: yet, yet he is free, and a disciple of Christ indeed! The Gospels of heaven are the charter by

which he enjoys his freedom—and the sanction of his Saviour tells him that the contents of that charter will be ratified in the kingdom which is prepared for him above. So yields he up his spirit into the hands of him who gave it him:—and what, my brethren, should be for ever impressed upon your minds, the FREEDOM which that spirit enjoys is to continue throughout endless ages—in bliss inconceivable and unabateable, world without end!

SERMON XX.

PSALM cxix. 71.

*It is good for me that I have been afflicted.**

IF there be one point of moral duty more frequently or more forcibly inculcated in Scripture than another, it is that of the endurance of affliction with patience. The necessity of this affliction, to man so strange and unaccountable, is sufficiently obvious to heaven: and bitter and undeserved as we may think the cup of affliction to be, it is nevertheless, in respect to our everlasting salvation, one of the most efficient remedies prescribed for our adoption.

"It is good for me;" it has greatly contributed to my comfort and repose, says the pious David, "that I have been afflicted;" that I have known the tendency and the im-

* November, 1809.

portance of adverse occurrences. The royal Psalmist does not say that affliction, while he endured it, was sweet or soothing; but that he found the *effects* of that affliction most consoling and profitable: he was in consequence a more rigid observer of moral duties, and a more punctual worshipper of his God.

How often, in the course of those beautiful compositions which we call the Psalms, (for their partaking of *joyful* strains) how often does David confess that prosperity had been prejudicial to him!—that it had made him negligent of his duty—and that whilst he seemed happy, his soul was lapsing into perdition, of which he was only made sensible when adversity or affliction weaned him from his pleasures. "Before I was afflicted," says he, in the psalm from which my text is taken, "I went astray, but *now* have I kept thy word."

My brethren, the case of David is strongly applicable to every human being in existence; and the principles by which prosperity is made to poison, and adversity to purify us, are yet operating in the breast of man.

Why do we think adversity, before we taste it, to be so nauseous and bitter? Because it checks our pride, humbles our pre-

tensions, and teaches us to treat those with christian meekness and christian humility, whom before we had trampled upon with disdain. We are all too haughty, or too prejudiced, or too prone by nature to sin, to contemplate affliction with complacency. It teaches us truth, when we would rather listen to falsehood; it blunts the edge of passion, when we would wish to gratify it to the utmost: it speaks humility, when we are impatient of restraint; and it whispers resignation, when we think only of unqualified rebellion. These are among the consequences of affliction, which render it so bitter to our palates; these are the things, the things which "make for our peace," but which man is too blind to behold, or too prejudiced to embrace. It was not so, however, with the author of my text; "it is good for me," says he, "that I have been afflicted;" because I now keep thy word, and observe thy testimonies.

It shall be the object of this discourse to shew, that the observation of the Psalmist is founded upon justice, and upon a thorough knowledge of the human heart; and that afflictions have a tendency to produce reformation and happiness. It may be necessary

to shew this by particular instances of illustration.

Experience proves, that they who have *themselves* been visited by trouble and affliction, are the most inclined to pity *others* who are visited by the like misfortune. Those only know how to give proper advice on such occasions, who have experienced the good effects resulting from adopting it themselves. To what purpose does it serve the poor afflicted mourner, to pour forth his tale of wretchedness into *that* bosom which has been hardened by pride, or into those ears which have been deafened by prosperity? Sympathy, the parent of a thousand joys, is felt not here!—although a liberal education, and general principles of moral instruction, may teach us to give alms with readiness, and not to deride the miseries of our afflictions!—yet what consolation does this *negative* excellence impart?

There are a thousand woes that afflict the human mind, which can never be alleviated by the possession of worlds of wealth; but they may be diminished or diverted by soothing advice, by sympathetic demonstrations, by gentle words, and by those traits of genuine feeling and pity, which so emphati-

cally marked the conduct of our blessed Redeemer. Those who have felt as he, or as David felt, will convince the world of the excellence of affliction by imparting to the afflicted all the comfort which it is so much in their power to bestow: and, remember, that to bear the infirmities, and to lighten the sorrows of each other, are duties which our Lord and his apostles at all times most earnestly enjoined.

Among other advantages of affliction, there is one which can never be overlooked; and this is, that it represses the insolence and humbles the pride of man.

By pride and presumption the angels fell: and to be distinguished by a supercilious disregard for our fellow-creatures, to soar above them in expenses, in pleasures, and sensual gratifications, is, I fear, the too general failing of human nature. They who live at ease under the shelter of comfortable homes, or who enjoy one undeviating course of health and prosperity, learn to imagine that luxury, and health, and power, contain in them all the perfections of body and mind; and that those who have them not, must necessarily be undeserving of their regard. But who shall say how long these comforts, if

they must be so considered, shall last? The power, the riches, or the health, which I enjoy to day, may be taken from me to-morrow. My brethren, this is not the language of theory, but it is the language of truth.—Look around you in this country, or in other countries, and you will see the maxim abundantly verified. But look round you *at home*, and see with what certainty adversity visits the rich, as well as the moderate in life. How hard does the shower fall upon that man's head, who has made no provision to be sheltered from its attack: "trouble, like death, equals all; and, at its coming, the frivolous marks of worldly distinction shrink into their natural insignificancy." Approach the chamber of sickness, or visit the once splendid abode of amusement—and see how, as with the touch of a talisman, every thing is changed and faded! The eye of rapture is dim, the cheek of hope is pale, and the bosom of expectation is depressed: Ah! who shall administer comfort now, and to whom shall the rich or proud man fly for consolation? Who shall tell him of the proper use to be made of his present condition? Who shall sooth him upon the loss of the partner or child of his bosom—or, who convince him that the

deprivation of wealth is inflicted by heaven in mercy—and that these visitations are only blessings in disguise? Who, my brethren, among the sons of men, shall *then* approach and administer consolation to a mind thus distracted? Who, but those who have felt sorrow and affliction! These shall tranquillise and elevate his spirits: these shall tear away the mask with which his perverted fancy had disguised the face of human things; and shall convince him, as David was convinced, that it is "good to be afflicted," because he will in future keep the covenants of his Maker.

Another important advantage, resulting from being visited by affliction is, that it weans us from too great a love of this world. Here Satan is constantly on his watch seeking whom he may devour. Here he is constantly striving whom, as he sought to do with St. Peter, he may sift as wheat. Pleasure, wealth, sensual gratifications, in a thousand alluring forms, lead us on apace far from the path of virtue; nor do we discover the perdition that awaits us till we stand upon its very brink. Sorrow and affliction wean us gradually from too passionate an indulgence of these things, and from thus rushing headlong down the precipice of ruin. The world is an enchan-

tress; but we must be roused from the effects of her enchantments, painful as the operation may be. And who would not be roused from it, if the future consequence were pointed out to them? The Almighty knows the dreadful and eternal miseries that await us, if we go on intoxicated with worldly delights; and therefore, in the midst of our enjoyments, while we build our barns and calculate upon our wealth, he speaks to us in a warning voice—"Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee!" And merciful indeed are his decrees when he does not *instantaneously* sweep us from the face of the earth: but enable us to prepare ourselves somewhat for our future destiny, by humility, by affliction, and resignation. "It is good, therefore, for us to be afflicted." We see things justly and in their proper shapes—we learn to appreciate human nature correctly—to love and assist our fellow-creatures, and to moderate our passions, and raise our hopes in a manner worthy of being disciples of him, who was, in every respect, a MAN OF SORROWS and acquainted with grief! Compared with *his*, what are the accumulated afflictions of the whole world? There is nothing which man hath ever endured that can be put in

competition with the sufferings of our Saviour—and these sufferings too all felt for us, "miserable sinners!" There is an heroic disinterestedness, a matchless, and, as it were, sublime magnanimity, in this affliction, which seems equally beyond the conception and attainment of mortal powers.

The last advantage which I shall notice, as attached to the patient endurance of affliction, is, that it softens our tempers, tranquillises our hopes, and produces a more equable and correct deportment in life. One virtuous heart is worth a thousand brilliant capacities, divested of gentleness of disposition. Now, to enjoy such human perfection, we have only to be acquainted with those who have been humbled by misfortune; or who have wept over the losses of relations and friends. Here, there is no disguise; here, the purity of mental feeling may be instantly acknowledged; here a suavity of manner, and mildness of action and of speech are immediately noticed:—and we feel certain correspondent emotions, which take entire possession of our very hearts. These are the charms which affliction bestows. These are the ornaments of a character that acknowledges the goodness of heaven in all its decrees, and its mercy in that

of chastising whom it loveth. He who hath seen affliction, acts no studied part in life, but instinctively helps the feeble, and solaces the despondent.

Let us now, in conclusion, make a few general observations in the application of what hath been already advanced upon the subject.

Since, my brethren, affliction seems to be man's patrimony, birthright, and inheritance —since we are born to troubles as the sparks fly upwards, and since these troubles are intended by a gracious Providence for our edification and comfort, what remains but that we sedulously strive, in our respective vocations, to be prepared for them in a proper manner, and to meet them with the confidence of men who do not sorrow without hope. Nor let us suppose that the day of adversity can never arrive. Let us not drive off all thoughts of preparation for it by idle conjectures or irrational hopes. He who foresees the coming tempest, is the best prepared against its overwhelming effects. It is not in loss of wealth, in loss of friends, or in loss of various bodily and mental comforts, that affliction can only visit us. There are a thousand unguarded channels through which it assails us; and there is scarcely perhaps one single be-

ing, of all here assembled, who will not confess that his mind is harassed or made uneasy by some foreboding apprehensions, or his hopes darkened by some unexpected misery or misfortune. It is in *anticipating* affliction that we are best enabled to endure it when it *arrives*. Let us not, therefore, live thoughtless of the morrow, or improvident of the future. Let us so regulate our passions, and hopes, and wishes, that we may be able to hail prosperity and adversity as welcome alike!

Happy is the man who lives with this end in view; and who, when the hour of affliction overtaketh him, is calm and resigned to the supreme will: who is not anxious to excel in a thousand trifling, unsubstantial, irrational pursuits—or to consider that man, like the insect of a summer-day, is created only to fly from flower to flower, and to sip the poisoned honey of pleasure.

Truly, if this life were to constitute the only scene of action, such conduct might meet with some justification; but since we are all mingling in that journey, from whose bourn no traveller returns—since to death, an IMMORTALITY succeeds—and since even in this life the bitterest affliction may be our

lot, let it be a point of anxious consideration with us all, so to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom; and as a portion of this wisdom, learn, with the Psalmist, to bear affliction with fortitude. Hence shall we become better acquainted with God and ourselves: hence shall we learn to observe the ordinances of our Maker, to keep his statutes, and to walk in the same all the days of our life.

SERMON XXI.

JOB, i. 21.

The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord? *

THERE are few people, accustomed to reflection, (whatever their particular religious principles may be) who are not struck, in the book of Job, with frequent and forcible instances of uncommon resignation to the will of heaven. There is so much sensibility, acuteness of feeling and of suffering in the example of Job, that let a man's principles be ever so light, and his habits of reflection ever so few, still he must be struck with something which he is conscious he never before was struck with; and hence may probably feel a seriousness and devotedness to God, which, from

* Preached, March, 1810, on the death of the Author's younger son.

other examples of antiquity, never would have been kindled in his bosom.

The fact respecting Job, with whose history you must be well acquainted, (and therefore it need not be here elaborately discussed) the fact respecting Job was briefly and simply this. He was a powerful and a wealthy man; of great influence, and of great possessions. In the midst of his splendor, however, he never forgot the God of his fathers; that is, he constantly attended to the offices of religion. Now, over this man Satan is permitted to have temporary sway; in order that his firmness and resignation, and the glory of the Almighty in consequence, may be shewn in a more wonderful manner. Accordingly, his body is afflicted with sore disease, and his property is on a sudden taken from him: part of his family are killed: his relatives and kinsmen forsake him: and general domestic, as well as particular personal calamity, assails him in the most dreadful shape. What shall he do in the acuteness of his aggregated sufferings? "Curse God and die," exclaimed one of his companions! But far different were the ideas and the language of Job! "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the

name of the Lord! Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"

This expression furnishes us, I think, with an accurate idea of the leading characteristic of Job's mind. Firmness under sufferings, and a constant submission to the will of *him* who inflicted them. Alike indifferent to the sarcasms of his comrades, and to the tortures of bodily complaint, his soul, like that of the first martyr St. Stephen, 'midst the violence of his murderers, was constantly rapt in divine meditation; the heavens, in imagination, were open to Job; and the consolations of that blessed place seem to have afforded him unspeakable transport, even while Satan was tormenting him with disease.

This then, my brethren, is a most beautiful and forcibly-speaking picture of the power of faith and hope!—and if, as has been before intimated, the most callous or indifferent reader must, occasionally, feel some serious impulses shooting across his heart, while he peruses the history of such a character—oh! how exquisitely soothing and satisfactory is the contemplation of the same character to a sober-minded Christian—to a genuine disciple in the school of his Redeemer

—or even to *one*, whose heart hath been like the heart of *him*, who is *now addressing you*, recently and intimately "acquainted with grief." "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord."

We will first make some general observations on the nature and force of the text, and afterwards direct both to more particular objects.

It hath been frequently said of this, as of other beautiful sentiments contained in the Bible, that, *abstractedly* considered, they are exquisitely correct and admirable; but that, such is the constitution of our minds and bodies, such the contrarieties and discordances which make up the human character, that it is seldom, if ever, they can be reduced to *practice*; seldom be of daily and constant service to mankind;—that, in the warmth of our feelings, or in the more sober and chastised tone of reasoning, with which we take up these books, or read these sentiments, we are disposed to allow them every degree of merit, of beauty, and of utility—but let the *moment of trial* and disaster arrive, let our property be taken from us, let our parents or children perish, we then pretend to find their futility and insufficiency; and rather,

like David for the loss of Absalom, call upon heaven to take us instead of our son!

My brethren, this mode of reasoning against the practicability of the pious precepts contained in the Bible, is, to speak the least harshly, both deceitful and dangerous; and, certainly, perfectly divested of truth! For when we peruse any of the sentiments of Job, or treasure up in our recollection the more impressive ones of our Saviour, and admit, even abstractedly, of their propriety or force, what is this, but admitting they have some *relation* to *actual* experience or circumstances, past or present! What is it but admitting that we know something *ourselves* of truth, correctness, virtue, and resignation! and how should we have known these latter had they never existed? If we had never seen with our eyes, or heard with our ears, such characters and such things, or our forefathers had never experienced them, they would never have been handed down for our learning and improvement. To a blind man, it is folly to talk of light, or to describe its effect upon the varied surface of the globe. To a thoroughly corrupt, and constantly sinning character, it is equal absurdity to suppose he can know and feel the benign influence of

innocence and virtue. Talk to him of the obvious importance, and equally palpable comforts, of a pure moral line of conduct; and he will laugh at your affected seriousness, and spurn the salutary advice given. And thus it is with the Sceptic and Atheist. If they are resolved never to read writers who have elucidated the doctrines, and unfolded the history of Christianity; if they will bring every thing to the fanciful and fallacious standard of their own particular feelings and thoughts; if they will not consider the truth of Christianity logically, according to the evidence brought forward in support of it; they may then deny its power, and triumph in their incredulity if it please them; but, surely, let not either of these reasoners and declaimers be called *competent judges* of the matter discussed! Let them not, without a rigorous and constant opposition, go abroad like lions seeking whom they may devour; or rather, like serpents secretly insinuating their poison, and thinning the flock of Christ!

It is in this, as in many other subjects of far less consequence—namely, that we bring our own *particular* feelings, formed according to our *previous* habits, to bear upon the subject in contemplation; and because our feel-

ings and habits have been perverted or partially corrupted, we think there can be no truth, no consolation, no efficacy in those exalted and precious sentiments, which seem to have come, as it were, from the bosom of God, to comfort the beings whom he hath created; which, in the calm, sober, and virtuous mind, have a strong and constant hold; which are indelibly engraven upon the heart of a sincere Christian; and the full force and consolation of which he does, in an especial manner experience, when misfortune takes from him his property, or lays the partner or *child* of his bosom in the dust. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord."

Having thus endeavoured to shew the fallacy of treating these scriptural precepts as if they had no foundation in truth, I come now to submit a few observations upon the *danger* of this mode of reasoning and conduct; and in this latter view of the subject, I shall exclude from my consideration such characters as have been before described to you—as thoroughly and irreclaimably wicked.

There is a large class of Christians who suffer occasional despondency to have a very

powerful effect upon their minds; and *one* of the most frequent causes of this despondency is, I fear, the apparent *difficulty*, or the supposed present *inefficiency*, of scriptural texts; that they are either difficult to comprehend, or have, as yet, (as it is imagined,) been productive of no positive good to themselves.

The former may be safely, in part, admitted; and, in the nature of God's dispensations, some passages of the Old and New Testament must remain—as subjects of pious exercise and trial for our skill and reasoning, or as speaking proofs of our finite capacities, some passages and circumstances must remain—unexplained 'till the great period of general resurrection. Redemption, considered of itself, is a wonderful and inexplicable doctrine. That the sins of many should be washed away by the sufferings of ONE; and this individual suffering should be that of the only *Son of God;* is, to our limited reasons, quite incomprehensible; although in the efficacy of this suffering and atonement we are peremptorily called upon to believe—for we can be saved by no other means, and by no other name than that of CHRIST under heaven! The doctrine of *hereafter* is equally

awful and inexplicable. The tortures of the wicked, and the delights of the good, equally confound and amaze us. But nevertheless we are told, by the revealed word of God, in language not to be mistaken, that such things will come to pass; and believe them, with all our hearts and minds, we certainly must—if we have any sense of our present, or any wish for a future happy, state of existence!

Does it therefore, my brethren, seem surprising that apparent difficulties should hang about *other* parts of the stupendous whole? and that when the *great, leading* features of Scripture are occasionally wrapt in mist and darkness, the *minor* ones should sometimes strike us as somewhat obscured? And are we such pure and perfect beings, so distinguished for humility, love, and devotedness to God, that the Almighty should condescend to explain to us every tittle of his will and word? When every thing sublunary around us is full of wonder, and hard of explanation—from the lily in the field, to the oak in the forest—from the soft and fertile meadow, to the hard and barren rock—and yet we acknowledge the divine hand of him who created them—are we to withdraw our allegi-

ance or admiration from God, if, in the *spiritual* world, equal wonders and difficulties appear? No, my brethren: be only consistent in your homage; be always ready with your tribute of praise; and instead of suffering such difficulties to depress you, think of the many, and most important, simple, and obvious propositions there are in the Scriptures, which demand your constant attention, and the force of which should be attested in your lives as well as acknowledged by your lips.

Let us now say a few words, in conclusion, in regard to the *effect* of these scriptural passages upon us; admitting them to be true, and being in full possession of their meaning, —"We do not find, it seems, that consolation which we expected." And why is this? Is it because we have clung too pertinaciously to the *world?*—or is it because, not having before known sorrow, we were led to conceive it might be alleviated by a miracle from heaven? The fact, I believe, is, that, as in a thoroughly serious and virtuous bosom, sorrows take a strong hold, so God Almighty permits those occasions, in which such sorrow visits us, to be seasons of *trial;* of patience, of perseverance in resignation;

of purging the grossness of worldly sensualities; and of placing, distinctly and forcibly before the Christian's view, the insignificancy of his past enjoyments; the frailty of human life; and the absolute necessity there is of constantly lifting up his heart and his eyes towards that heavenly city, which is to be his future resting place, and whose builder and maker is HIMSELF!

If, then, we have hitherto felt little consolation in the application of scriptural passages of comfort; if we have not blessed the name of the Lord for *taking away* as well as for *giving*; rely upon it we are not yet arrived at that matured state of christian knowledge, which will always sustain us in the midst of sufferings, however acute. Rely upon it, that Satan, in the character of worldly pleasures, in the lusts of the eye and of the flesh, is contending to have the mastership over us; and that while we lend an ear, however carelessly, to his insinuations—while we look backward upon Gomorrah, instead of forward towards Jerusalem—we shall continue in apathy and hardness of heart. The dew of heaven is shed upon the *penitent* and *resigned* sinner, not upon the hesitating and timid victim of

worldly sensuality. We must not trifle, and affect to compromise; we must not to-day say, that God is good and just, and chasteneth whom he loveth; and to-morrow discard him from our thoughts, or call him an unrelenting task-maker!

Not thus must we act; but contrariwise let us only be consistent, and persevere in such consistency; and, in the end, we shall find rest to our souls. To myself, now suffering under the heavy hand of affliction—to *me*, the deprivation under which I now labour and grieve, would be equally sorrowful and insupportable, did not the benign influence of heavenly truths sustain me upon the occasion! "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord!"

I conclude, therefore, by earnestly exhorting every one who is solicitous of pure and rational comfort here, and of the state of his soul hereafter, to place the consoling efficacy of the words of my text nearest to his heart—to consider well, that, if before the next sabbath arrive, he should be afflicted in any degree like the author or *expounder* of these words—it is his duty to submit, and to bless the name of him who smites as well as heals;

who is the author of our being, our protector, our Saviour, and our best friend! It is, indeed, most dangerous to our present repose, as well as to the future welfare of our souls, to imagine that we were born only to taste of pleasure, and that the cup of affliction was never to be administered to our lips: that, although the Son of the Most High was a man of sorrows and intimately acquainted with grief, yet we, perverse, fickle, vain, and sinning mortals, are never to taste one drop of the afflictions of *that cup*—of which our Saviour was compelled to drink the very dregs!

And if, my brethren, in the BIBLE—if in the book of heaven—we fancy that we do *not* find the consolation which we expected, from what *other* sources, I ask, are we to derive that wished-for consolation? What *other* lights will hold out their friendly fires to conduct in safety over the tempestuous ocean of human existence? What other beacons are to prevent our shattered barks from being dashed against the rock, or swallowed up in the whirlpool? There are NONE. There is only one comforter, which is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. There is only one port to receive our tempest-

beaten vessels—and oh! may we always keep that harbor steadily in view! May the spirits of the departed dead rise up to alarm and to vex us, when we listen to the songs of that syren-voice, which warbles only to undo. May the anchor of hope at last have rest in that heavenly place, where the sun never ceases to shine—where the water is tranquil and clear—and where the spirit of God shall eventually subdue all things to itself! May we be brought again to revisit and to bless those who have been taken from us—revered for their age and wisdom, or caressed for their innocence and simplicity;—when all tears are to be wiped away from our eyes—and when we shall exclaim, in the fulness of our transport, that the Almighty is an ever affectionate as well as just parent; that he tries his servants here for their future good; and that when he deprives us of our parents or our *children*, his name is nevertheless to be blessed—"for he "GIVETH as well as TAKETH AWAY."

SERMON XXII.

ROMANS, vii. 24.

*O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?**

SUCH is the exclamation of a pious and penitent soul, deeply impressed with a sense of the predominance of sin. Such was the exclamation of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, on a serious review of his past conduct, and from an earnest wish to be liberated from the thraldom to which such reflections gave rise. Such too, my brethren, will be the exclamation of *yourselves*, if you have wandered from your God, and felt the horrid slavery of a conscience that upbraids you for doing wrong. Let us see, therefore, *who* and *what* it is which is to "deliver us from the body of this death."

The chapter from which the text is taken

* April, 1810.

is deserving of your attention on many accounts; but on none so particularly as in shewing you the struggles of a conscientious mind against the efforts of sin, and the absolute misery and despair which are the result of a blind obedience to the evil passions of the human heart.

St. Paul begins by making a few observations on the efficacy of the law; upon those who have submitted to it by entering into the usual contracts of civilized society, and in particular into the *marriage-contract.* But he immediately adds, that we become dead to the law by the body of Christ—that is, the influence and dictates of the Gospel supersede those of the law—the lesser is absorbed in the greater—"the law came by Moses, but grace and truth by Jesus Christ." The Apostle then exhorts the Roman community which he addresses, to be "married to another: even to him who is raised from the dead; that they may bring forth fruit unto God." "For when," continues he, "we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death." The meaning of which is, direct your views and unite your

principles and your feelings with things of an heavenly character: the law, enacted by man, can work only human things—the Gospel, descending from above, can accomplish heavenly matters. While therefore the influence of merely human laws prevails, the motions of sin, arising out of that law, bring forth deadly fruits: but the fruits that are to be brought forth unto God, spring out of a contrite, and humble, and spiritualized mind —a mind, which is alive to every pure principle, and every perfect work: against which the machinations of human wisdom, and the subtleties of human law, prevail nothing.

St. Paul, after telling the Romans that, by the coming of the Gospel, they are delivered from the law, says, "Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had known not sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet:"—that is, the law, by prescribing punishments for certain criminal acts, supposes the existence of those acts; and calls up in my mind the recollection of their inviting aspect, and insidious tendency—and passions, which I had hoped were at rest, are again roused into action. "Sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of con-

cupiscence. For without the law sin was dead. When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died."

This will be found, I apprehend, a pretty correct picture of human nature in general. In the absence of religious principles and religious consolation, sensuality and vexation take possession of the human heart; which, like a vessel without a helm in the midst of a turbulent sea, is the sport of every gust, and at length the victim of some overwhelming wave. Every man who chuses seriously and conscientiously to reflect, to examine his past and present, and to consider his future probable, actions, or the schemes which he has laid for the fulfilment of certain worldly objects which are dear to his heart—every man, I say, who chuses in this manner to exercise his reflections, must acknowledge, that, if he has discarded all notions of scripture and of religion, and consequently of virtue and moral actions, that sin revives; the spirit languishes; and the body dies—and then who is to "deliver him from the body of his death?"

Will man and human dictates accomplish this? Will merely worldly wisdom effect it? No: we deceive ourselves most grossly if we draw such a conclusion. "To the law and

to the Gospel"—to the salutary influence of heavenly truths—to the mild, soothing, and substantial consolation to be derived from an intimate acquaintance with the will and purposes of God. These, my brethren, are the only sources of succor in every perilous contention with the opposition of Satan and sin: and if you imagine that the law *merely* can effect this, that merely correct notions of moral conduct can "deliver you from the body of that death" which ensues from an unqualified surrender of your wills and affections to carnal lusts and appetites, there is no hope of safety, and no ground of rest: your souls, "tossed to and fro," can never "reach the haven where it would be."

How fallacious is human reason! and how many, even of upright and apparently happy characters, are secretly the slaves of the turbulent and sinful passions of human nature. Here, one flatters himself with the general tenor of a sober and prudent conduct: no man's property is violated; no blasphemies escape his lips; no scepticism marks his mode of thinking: he is, upon the whole, regular and decent in his attendance on Church service, and he wishes well to "all sorts and conditions of man!" Now, some will say

that this is the representation of a perfect character—as far as human nature *can be perfect*: But there is a power above, who knows something more of human nature; who is acquainted with the inmost recesses of the heart of such a character; and who has watched over every action the most minute. Such an omniscient power will oftentimes hear the secret sighs which burst from his oppressed heart. Perfect, happy, and enviable as this human character may seem—he, when there is nothing between his God and himself, will say, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"—And why is it thus? and wherefore should human nature be thus deceptive, and wretched within itself? It is because "sin revives, and the body dies:" it is, because so many struggles to render ourselves happy without the *influence of a pure religious principle*, make us the slaves and outcasts of Satan. Let us more particularly discuss this important subject. Will the attainment of those qualifications, before described, render us perfectly happy and good? Ask yourselves the question. You are temperate in your conduct, and in your speech: you go to the house of God regularly; you are charitable, and wish

well to all mankind; and with these things you rest contented: you sleep securely, as you may think, upon the pillow of human credulity and human flattery, without considering that the brink of eternity is near, and that you will start with horror from that slumber when some dream informs you of the perilousness of your condition.

The Spirit that is from on high thus interrogates you...." Where, O man, is thy boasted excellence? If thou art temperate, art thou so from a consciousness of its worth, or from its gratifying thy vanity in distinguishing thee apart from thy fellow-creatures, and in triumphing secretly at their miseries? Hast thou strove to render others thus secure from the wretchedness of intemperance? Has it softened thy heart, and taught thee to thank God for the blessings of an equal and quiet mind? Having reason to cultivate, and faith to be directed, are the opportunities which temperance afforded you, occasionally even devoted to pursuits connected with heavenly considerations? Have you been taught humility, diffidence, and that true charitable disposition, which, like the sun shedding its rays equally upon the just and the unjust, prompts you to enter into the hovel of

wretchedness, be the inhabitants of whatsoever denomination they may! If the virtues of which thou boastest, kindle not one spark of this nature within thy bosom, thou art a stranger to happiness—to that peace which passeth all human understanding."

Again. When worshipping in the temple of your God, where wander the thoughts during divine service? With what feelings are responses made, or ejaculations uttered! Does the proud spirit bend with the knee—and do you strive, and hope, and pray for being comforted by prayer, and enlightened by the exposition of God's word? When you feel and acknowledge your manifold sins and corruptions, to *whom* do you pray to be delivered from the "body of such a death?" My brethren, examine yourselves truly; and say, whether the excellence of worship consist only in the form—or whether you have not sometimes mistaken the *form* for the *substance!* If so, you are a stranger to the vital principles of religion. God requires of you, not only an obedience to the outward forms, but an acquaintance with the inward virtues of that mode of worship, which is built upon a firm and fixed belief of the merits of Christ to obtain everlasting salvation.

Consider, again and again, that we may boast of the quiet uniform tendency of our lives, and of the punctuality with which we discharge certain public forms of duty, whether connected with the laws of God or of man; but if we do nothing *beyond* these, we fall greatly short of the glory of our Maker—a death unto righteousness awaits us....and who is to deliver us from "the body of this death?"

I answer—JESUS CHRIST, the author and finisher of our faith. There is no other name under heaven by which we can be saved: but observe *how* is Christ to deliver us from this sinful thraldom? Not merely by being "called upon;" not, when men have, with their eyes open, and their reflection awake, gone on from iniquity to iniquity, and wickedness to wickedness, continuing determinedly in sin—"that grace may abound." God forbid—says the great Apostle of the Gentiles; and so says every honest and enlightened minister of the christian church! Heaven forbid that such a construction should be put upon the atoning spirit of the Lamb of God! If we come to Christ in sincerity and truth—that he will vouchsafe to deliver us from the body of the death of sin, let us approach him with deep humiliation, con-

trition, reverence and awe. He is merciful, but he is just. He is ready to save, but he is also prompt to reprimand and to punish. Do we, after repeated admonitions respecting our heinous course of life—after constant promises to amend and as certainly violating those promises—approach that awful character who is to be our judge at the latter day, and exclaim, "deliver me from the body of this death!" Were the *five virgins*, when they were conscious of their own slothful stupidity and egregious folly, in not providing themselves with oil for their lamps, were *they*, when they arrived, admitted to the bridegroom's feast? No: the "door was shut"—"Verily I know you not," exclaimed a voice from within.... and they returned in sorrow and despair.

My beloved brethren, let us lay these things seriously to our hearts. If, as by the tenor of this discourse I have endeavoured to shew, we are by nature, weak and inefficient in good principles and works—if the law remind us only of enormities which we have committed, and thus revive the force of sin, whereby we die—if Christ alone can free us "from the body of this death:"—and, if in order to obtain this freedom we are to approach him in a frank, yet humble manner, let it be the business of every remaining mo-

ment of our lives to act worthy of the gracious promises held out in the Gospel, and with the assured hope and conviction that, through Jesus Christ our Lord, we may partake of the happiness which is prepared us in imperishable mansions.

Such a conviction alone will produce those best of all sober and temperate habits, whereby we may become an ornament to society, a blessing to our families, and an ensample to all those who are to come after us. Such a conviction alone will correct all intemperate sallies of thought, and frivolous irregularities of conduct; and if we are really fond of the worship of our Maker, we shall enter his sacred temple, not as a mere idle observer of forms, but as desirous to hold a communion with him in sincerity and in truth. Into such a heart, so piously and virtuously disposed, God Almighty will pour the healing influences of the Holy Spirit. It will not have to exclaim, "O wretched creature that I am—who shall deliver me from such a bondage!" but, deeply and seriously impressed with the comforts of such a heavenly visitation, it will exult, not from merely enthusiastic, evanescent feelings—but from a grave and settled conviction it will exult,—

and look upon THE ALMIGHTY as its father and best of friends!

Unspeakably gracious is that Providence which hath thus attached the anchor of hope to the tempest-beaten vessels of life. Inconceivably blest and happy is that Christian, who, in the dark night of terror and shipwreck, hath found it a sure source of succor and preservation. He bears the lesser evils of life's voyage, with a serene and unshaken mind; for in the ultimate moment of anguish and distress, he knows there is one who hath invited him to approach, and to take rest to his soul. The weary and heavy laden, as St. Paul once was, know how to cast off their burdens, and who is to deliver them from their intolerable pressure.

Where despair, and pain, and a feverish anxiety prevailed, hope and comfort now reside; and there is no murmuring, and no fruitless imprecations, and no extravagant wishes or vows preferred, where such a state of mind prevails. All is sunshine, but the radiance is not transitory; for heaven hath illuminated it with its own fires, and strengthened it with its own succors.

And so may we all pass from this mortal scene to another—from death unto life, from

time to eternity. Believe me, such impressions, in a virtuous and religious bosom, are not, and cannot be, *fleeting*. They are grafted upon some of the wisest and most efficacious of Gospel truths: and, totally unconnected with vain superstition on the one hand, and frantic enthusiasm on the other, they seem to be the best preparations for that state of existence which awaits us beyond the grave.

If we have families, let us instil these principles into our children. If we have those in a subordinate situation around us, let them feel the full benefit of such instruction: for when our ashes are at rest—when those of him who is now addressing you shall be scattered as dust before the winds of heaven—such impressions and such principles shall remain fresh and vigorous, and productive of immortal fruits. A present reflection even, that they may one day give rise to such inestimable benefits, should reconcile us to all the common hardships of life: should make us wiser and better men: should stimulate us, ardently and fearlessly, to spring forward to the mark—to the prize of our high calling, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

SERMON XXIII.

JOB, vi. 25.

*How forcible are right words!**

IT has been justly observed by those who are probably the most competent to pass judgment, that the HOLY SCRIPTURES, of all compositions, contain in them the most forcible and salutary precepts for the government of human passions, and for the regulation of human affairs. Every thing which militates against the honor and repose of individuals and of families; every thing which tends to blind the understanding, to corrupt the heart, or to annihilate the credit and comfort of society, is, in these inspired writings, most strikingly set forth.

Are we arrogant? God Almighty tells us, in the language of his Son, to humble ourselves as little children. Are we at once cen-

* June, 1808.

sorious and vain? The same heavenly monitor tells us to discard all reflections upon the frailties of our brethren; and to fall upon our knees, and smite our breasts and say, "God be merciful to us, sinners." Are we precipitate in passing judgment upon our fellow-creatures? Our Saviour says, "judge not and ye shall not be judged." Do we wish to help the poor and needy, and to be liberal in our charitable donations? The Bible does not suppress this feeling; but it tells us to be beneficent in secret, and our father shall openly reward—that one hand is not to know what the other hand doeth. Are we desirous to approach our heavenly father with prayer and supplication? Let us do so privately, and not in the public streets, to be seen and heard of men. Let us lock ourselves within our chambers, and God, who "knoweth our necessities before we ask, and our ignorance in asking," will listen to our earnest and unpremeditated effusions; and if they proceed from an absolute sincerity of feeling, he will, in his gracious mercy, condescend to promote the object of our wishes.

Thus, in every respect consonant with the omnipotent power which called man into existence from the dust of the earth, are the

decrees which he prescribes, and the principles which he inculcates, for our well doing here, and our felicity hereafter. We see not our moral duties darkly, as through the glass which heathen philosophers presented to our sight: but we see them clearly, distinctly, and impressively developed. We cannot turn to the right, or to the left, and say, we want the straight way to be pointed out. It *is*, on the contrary, before our eyes; and happy are they who find it, and walk therein.

These preliminary remarks will not be thought irrelative by those, who are accustomed to connect principles and sentiments, as they form a constituent part of the work to which their attention is directed. The Bible abounds, if I may so speak, with this congruity of principle and of sentiment. Turn over its pages, and you will find therein a wonderful and beautiful coincidence of propriety of feeling. For ages before our Lord appeared, the language of sincerity was considered the language of the heart; and the words of wisdom, the words of irrefragable truth. The statutes of the Lord, by which are oftentimes meant the principles and the maxims which he permits wise and holy persons to promulgate, are the statutes of never

failing wisdom; and surely no man ever seemed to have been more deeply impressed with a sense of their efficacy, than the mournful author of my text, when he exclaimed, "*How forcible are right words!*"

In calling your attention more particularly to the elucidation of this impressive maxim, I shall first endeavor to shew in what manner the force of right words, by which is meant TRUTH, is evinced; and, secondly, if the utterance of them be attended with such important effects, how imperatively it becomes our duty to attend to them in the most trivial occurrences of life. First then, the force of right words, or of truth, is to be exemplified.

Error and tergiversation are, somehow or the other, interwoven in our very natures; and although we readily condemn and censure them, we are too frequently guilty of both. Now, it is incumbent on me to shew the bad tendency of these in *ourselves*, however others may escape them. Heaven hath implanted in our conscience, a quick and a sensitive principle, which is alive to every deviation from strict truth and propriety. A man may secure his doors, and defend his house against the

intrusion of his fellow-creatures, but there *is* a power within him, which he cannot possibly thrust from his notice. It will knock at his heart, and be heard in spite of the most strenuous opposition. Is he guilty of unprincipled actions? How forcible are "right words" in representing unto him his error, and rousing him from the criminal lethargy in which he slumbers! Some hardened characters may tell you openly, and with vaunting insolence, that they neither hear nor feel these things; but though they may thus impose upon *you*, there are *two* powers upon which no subtlety or fraud can have the least possible effect—GOD, and their CONSCIENCE: and mark, I beseech you, how forcible are right words in this particular instance.

The guilty wretch, who, for a long season of iniquity, hath carried on a successful career; who has apparently set man and his Maker at defiance; even *he* is not insensible to the force of right words, or of truth. Rely upon it that his struggles, in secret, are frequent, to wear a face of pleasure with a heart of pain: and however he may, before the world, pretend to palliate his crimes, and screen himself from the just imputation which such

crimes excite, he is nevertheless, at heart, a wretched and a distracted man.

Upon *him*, right words have the most painful effect. They do not descend like the dews of heaven to refresh and invigorate his fainting soul; but, like the tempest excited by a fiend, to multiply and sharpen his afflictions. Happy in right earnest is he, who listens to the voice of truth; and finds it, as it sinks into his ear and upon his heart, the herald of comfort, and the harbinger of peace. There is hardly, indeed, one instance of human life so dreadful to dwell upon, as that of a man, ripened in iniquity, who shuns the counsel of the wise, and is appalled at the language of truth; or, in the import of my text, at the force of right words! These rekindle the half extinguished, or they set in flames the quickened embers, of corruption: and unless his conscience be quite frozen with insensibility, and never owned the influence of reason and of scripture, they produce effects not only the most alarming, but the most irremediable. Shall I, my brethren, as *example* is more forcible than *precept*, present to your consideration an instance, which I could wish were purely hypothetical.

A young man of respectable family, of

finished education, of bright hopes, and of reputable connexions, sets out in this gay and prosperous-seeming world, to attain wealth and fame. To him all is sunshine, and all seems as certain success. The inward recesses of the heart have not however been sufficiently guarded, and professions are made before principles have been inculcated. The consequence is, that to a disposition naturally benevolent, studied falsehood bears the semblance of truth; and specious promises are seized upon as advantageous performances. In an unguarded moment, assent is given to vicious principles; and, in a little time, the support of *false*, seems to be as honourable and advantageous as the support of *right*, words. Now every reflecting man knows, that between bad principles, bad thoughts, and bad actions, the partition is thin and slender indeed. Admit the first, and the second almost necessarily follows; and thus it is with respect to the subject of our consideration. Bad words, which he always hears, produce iniquitous actions: right words, which he hears almost when it was too late, beget the severest mental tortures; nor is it in my power to describe to you the dreadful agonies which he endures, or the imprecations which he

utters, upon those who have led him astray. Imagine, I beseech you, how horrible must be the reflections of a sensible mind, when it starts from the slumber of iniquity, and flies with trembling doubt, and fearful expectation, to the awful presence of TRUTH! *Her* unerring wand dissipates the fairy scene, which falsehood has depicted to the young man; and those pursuits, and those characters, which before seemed beauteous and inviting, are, by the force of such a talisman, converted into their proper shapes; when, instead of having the innocence of the Dove, they present only the frightfulness of the Serpent. To such a distracted mind, how small would be the consolation which *mere worldly* wisdom could hold out—and how fatal would be the tendency of a *fanatical* interpretation of the scriptures! Fortunately, he is restored by a seasonable and sober expounding of them; and he has since learnt, to the extreme happiness of himself and family, that right words, and a zealous adherence to truth, form the basis of every rational comfort, and every honorable gratification.

Having then explained to you, in as forcible a manner as I was able, the *effect* of right words upon ourselves and others, I

now come, in the second place, to dwell a little upon the *absolute necessity of attending to them* in all the occurrences of life.

Men, who accustom themselves to use right words, or to speak the truth, have nothing to fear. They do not live in a constant state of suspense and anxiety. They are not perpetually seeking an ambush to be concealed from the foe; and exclusively of the conscientious satisfaction which the approval of providence for such conduct must administer, they repose, if I may so speak, upon their pillows, with the assurance that they have not perverted the right end for which reason and religion have been given them. He who lives in a perpetual state of warfare with himself, lest some foul deed may be discovered, or some doubtful conduct be exposed, is, of all human beings, the most wretched and pitiable: you may talk to him of the charms of innocence, and of the delights of integrity, but his ears are stopped "charm you never so wisely."

Let us, therefore, in *early life*, be anxious to attend to the utterance of right words, to the language of truth: for if there be any one process or circumvention more than another, by which Satan even now holds do-

minion in a Christian world, it is that of instilling into the susceptible minds of *youth*, the propensities to the habits of *speaking falsely*; of declaring with their tongues, what they know, in their *consciences* and in their *hearts*, to be directly the reverse of the fact. But upon *parents* how doubly imposing is the task of uttering right words! When once we are found playing a part, or conducting ourselves unsteadily and insincerely—when once we banish truth, and introduce falsehood with our children, the consequences to be predicted are too dreadful to describe. And what rebuke can be more cutting and awful, than that, from the mouth of a sagacious and reflecting child to his parent, "thou hast not lied unto *me*, but unto GOD?"

My brethren! truth is to be seen by actions as well as by words. If we say to these innocent objects of our affection, that temperance is amiable, and meekness is just, and forgiveness is inculcated by God himself; and yet, in our *own* conduct, we display intemperance, insolence, and persecution, we are not uttering right words; we are secretly laughing at the supposed impotency of truth; and are, unwittingly, raising in the very bosom of our families, the standard of rebellion and misery,

No brighter eulogy can a parent have inscribed upon his tomb, than that of never having deceived his children; and, next to these, his neighbour and the world. To utter falsehoods, to those who are thus endeared to us, is to offer a serpent when we are asked for nutritious food.

In conclusion, then, let us at all seasons, and in all periods of human life, whether young or old, children or parents, let us steadily keep in mind the strong observation of Job, and remember the force of uttering RIGHT WORDS; that, in proportion to their confounding the wicked, they animate the good; and, softening the asperities of the human heart, lead the way to the display of every excellence which can confer dignity on our characters.

Riches are perishable; friends may desert us: but TRUTH, like charity, can never fail. She is the brightest attribute of the Deity; and shining in every page of the revelation of his will, by the testament of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, she tells us on what ground we are to cast anchor for the salvation of our immortal souls. The Christian, who cultivates this inestimable treasure, is cultivating the true seeds of everlasting life; is approx-

imating himself, by slow but sure degrees, to that bright pattern, that GREAT EXEMPLAR, from whose lips no falsehood was ever uttered, in whose heart no duplicity ever had place.

Animated by such principles, he casts an accurate and unblemished eye upon all the works of God's creation; and as he sees the fruit succeed the blossom, and the genial warmth of summer the cutting blasts of winter, so he finds the same beautiful propriety in all the actions of the MORAL WORLD. His soul is attuned to simplicity and benevolence; and, conscious that in all his thoughts, and words, and deeds, he has endeavoured to comprehend, and to act RIGHTLY, he waits the moment which is to sever him from this jarring world, with the unshaken serenity of *one* upon whom his Creator hath showered down the choicest of his blessings.

Every thing has taught him the force of "right words;" for in him right words are the result of right ideas and principles. And rely upon it, however imaginary we may consider such a character to be, or however doubtful the felicity of which it partakes, yet, let me appeal to you, if there can be one thing upon earth which can administer more

substantial gratification, or set a man higher in the estimation of his fellow-creatures, than that of having the solace of thinking he has uniformly *acted uprightly?* Adversity may overtake him; and scorn and derision, too frequently her companions, may also assault him. But he is immoveable. He despises such a combination of human littleness and human weakness. Upon his forehead is engraved the title which he so justly merits; and he says to the corrupted, to the time-serving, and the fickle, "I have shunned *wealth,* because it could not be obtained but at the price of *sacrificing* TRUTH; and I am rich in my distress and poverty, because *false words* have not flowed from my lips."

SERMON XXIV.

MATTHEW, XXV. 13.

*Watch, therefore; for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of Man cometh.**

THESE solemn words are preceded by a narrative or parable of five wise and five foolish virgins, who took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. They that were foolish took their lamps, without a sufficient supply of oil to replenish them, when the quantity that was burning within should be consumed. But the wise took oil in separate vessels, to trim and keep their lamps alight, in case of any unexpected emergency or disaster. Thus differently provided, they waited for the arrival of the bridegroom. It so happened that the bridegroom, from some particular occurrence, delayed coming quite so soon as was gene-

* March, 1806.

rally expected; and, during this delay, all the virgins slumbered and slept. At midnight, however, there was a great cry or proclamation made—"Behold, the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him." Roused by this unexpected summons, and ardently zealous to pay their respects to the bridegroom, the ten virgins rose up, and seizing their lamps, (which were extinguished during their sleep) prepared to trim them. But the foolish or improvident part, little anticipating this disaster, and unprovided with the means of lighting their lamps, said to the wise "give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out." But the wise answered, saying, "Not so; we did not bring sufficient for the supply of *all*; and if we spare you a part, we must necessarily ourselves be deprived of the proper quantity. But go ye rather to them that sell, and buy what you are in need of." Now, mark the sequel. While they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage-feast, and *the door was shut*. Afterwards came the five virgins who had returned from purchasing the additional quantity of oil; and naturally enough, finding the portals shut, cried aloud for entrance—"Lord, Lord, open to us."

But the bridegroom, astonished at this unexpected visit, and strange outcry for admission, concludes that there can be no proper person, at that late hour, entitled to be admitted to the feast; and therefore replies in a determined tone of voice, "Verily I say unto you, I know you not. I own not such slothful and improvident persons as fit to be received at my feast." Thus ends the parable: to which our Saviour subjoins the very solemn admonition contained in the words of my text. "*Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the son of man cometh.*"

These words, so pregnant with meaning, so necessary to be always held in remembrance, are of sufficient force to claim the earnest attention of every well disposed and serious Christian. They strike home indeed to the bosoms of us all. They sometimes arrest us in the hour of gaiety and dissipation, or they break in upon our notice in the still moments of seclusion and meditation. We know not the moment of our separation from this world, nor the day nor the hour wherein the son of man may surprise us in the world which is to come.

That hope of hereafter, that intimation of

eternity, that longing after immortality, which so eminently distinguishes man from the brute creation—these feelings should at all times excite him to pause and reflect, where he is, to what bourne he is journeying, and with what provisions he is fortified to keep up his spirits by the way. They should teach him to have his loins girt, and his *lamp trimmed,* lest unexpected disaster or unforeseen darkness overtake him on the road.

The conduct of the TEN VIRGINS furnishes us with a lesson for our behaviour in respect to the concerns of this world, and as they are connected with those of eternity. It is a lesson so striking, that the meanest intellect can understand it; and so comprehensive, that the most learned or the most exalted are not beyond the reach of its application. To my illustration, therefore, of this lesson, imperfect and inefficient as it may be, I earnestly request the attention of all here assembled within these walls of Christian worship.

Few maxims are more plausible and popular than the one of "enjoy the *present moment,* seize happiness while it is before you." This maxim is indeed particularly gratifying to human feelings, and human sensuality.

In the unrestrained indulgence of momentary delight, we may feel an unmixed degree of happiness; but it is so transient, and arises so frequently from the most trivial and ignoble source, that it not only passes away before one can say "it is," but leaves behind a sting at once piercing and excruciating. We may allow the sensualist, the votary of pleasure and dissipation, an exquisite degree of satisfaction in many of his pursuits; but are not these gratifications something like paroxysms of delirium, in a feverish and fitful state of body? Are they not sometimes forerunners of evil, of agony, and of remorse? Are they not as treacherous and delusive as the beauteous clouds of evening, which gather round the summit of the mountain, from which, ere the rise of the morning sun, burst the volcanic fires? If the most desperate calculator could possibly suppose, that the rapture and blessings of a long life could be enjoyed within the compass of a day; if, in short, the essence of happiness, like the essence of any vegetable or mineral substance, could be procured so to afford transport to a few short-lived moments;—where is the mortal, foolish and incautious enough, to rush to its participation? Would he not

perceive that he was about to seize the cup, whose intoxicating contents would deprive him of sense, of reflection, and of every positive advantage?

These wild emotions are of such a nature as to exclude true, sober, and solid happiness. Nothing of reason, nothing of virtue, nothing of rational knowledge could mingle with the enjoyment. On the contrary, it would be succeeded by the bitterest of all nauseas—that of a disturbed and distracted state of mind, and of a conscience wounded beyond the hope or possibility of cure.

But carry this principle of solely providing for, and enjoying, the *present* moment, one degree farther, and ask the flimsy and accommodating philosopher, what is to be the lot of those who are to come *after us*—of those who are to succeed to our *property* as well as to our *names?* Ask him if he have a son, a daughter, or relative whom he loves—and then, knocking hard at the bosom of nature, ask him if he dare sacrifice all these ties and considerations to the momentary gratification of a darling lust, or unhallowed passion?

The gamester, it is true, thinks not, during his dreadful revels, of the wife and children whom he dooms to penury and wretchedness

at home. While his uplifted arm throws the die of his own perdition,* he may tell you that it is the indulgence of an irresistible passion, and that he is seizing the present moment to advantage and to happiness. But oh, gracious God! what tortures dost thou inflict, when, on the return of reason and reflection, he thinks of that home, in which love, and peace, and contentment, were wont to reside—in which was once every pure joy, which dignified while it sweetened this world below! Where are flown the smiles of an affectionate wife, and what are become of the cares and caresses of the mother? In whose bosom shall the weeping children pour out their complaints? Whom shall they supplicate for clothes to cover their naked limbs, and for bread to nourish their famished bodies? To whom, but to their GOD, can they now prefer their petitions and wants? *Suicide* hath stretched their father in the premature grave —*madness* has driven their poor mother to the asylum which humanity has allotted to such hapless victims.

The argument, my brethren, painful as it must be to protract it, may be carried to a thousand other characters and situations in

* See note, page 261, ante

life:—to the thoughtless spendthrift, and to the improvident parent—to the artful and interested seducer of virtue and morality—to the vicious companion, and profligate associate. The fatality is, that after listening to and following the voice of the charmer, we are ridiculed for our credulity, and mocked when our calamity cometh. The wretch, who has administered poison in the disguise of palatable food, will add sarcasm to bodily torture, and aggravate the very pangs which he has himself inflicted. Shun therefore, my brethren, shun the moralist or philosopher who would seduce your senses by inculcating so specious and dreadful a maxim, as that of seeking for gratification *only in the present moment;* of going out to meet the Bridegroom without a sufficient supply of oil to trim and illumine your lamps; of not providing against the *contingencies of to-morrow*, as well as the accidents of to-day.

I shall devote the remainder of this discourse to the more important consideration of this principle as affecting our interests in ANOTHER WORLD:—as connected with our misery or happiness beyond the grave.

The fallacy of all human events should at least teach us caution and reserve. It should moderate the desires of the sanguine, and

check the plans of the presumptuous. Wisely and humanely doth our blessed Saviour tell us to watch and be on our guard; to anticipate futurity; to form such schemes as may be reasonable in themselves, and may provide against the moment of exigency and disaster. He cautions us, in the admonition contained in the text, to weigh well our present plans, and to be constantly watchful of the events of futurity.

Ever confident in prosperity, we think adversity can never arrive. Always easy respecting the longevity of man, and the comforts of this world, we seem forgetful of the moment when our existence may be suddenly snapt asunder, and when we may be called unexpectedly before the tribunal of an Almighty judge. We think, in short, the LAMP OF LIFE *will burn for ever;* or, like the foolish virgins in the parable, we think it never requires care, attention, and supply. Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour when time shall pass away, and eternity begin. Before the next Sabbath arrive, of how many will the grave be the resting place? Even while these words escape the lips, some moralist has been suddenly cut short in his dreams of future bliss; some phi-

losopher has become dumb, and stiffened in death, in the midst of all his calculations upon human happiness!

My brethren, there is not a moment of our existence, if we chuse to give the subject a serious and unprejudiced consideration, but what has a close connexion with our immortal concerns. Life is given us that we may render it instrumental to a blessed ETERNITY. In all the discourses, and in every action, of our blessed Saviour, you observe how cautiously, yet how determinedly, he connects every thing with a state of happiness beyond the grave. It is not necessary to quote innumerable passages from his discourses, and especially in his more familiar ones, disclosed in the Gospel according to St. John....from which the foregoing inference is abundantly manifest. You must all be impressed with such a truth. And if you were not from *scriptural* authority, you must, or should be so, from the certain evidence of events as they are daily passing before your eyes: from the fickleness and caprice of human conduct: from the fallacy of most of our anticipations: from the unlooked-for visitations of sickness and sorrow: from accidents or misfortunes, at once terrible and unfore-

seen; from death, not less terrible and sudden. Alas! what then is existence, and how is happiness attainable? Happiness is to be attained by vigilance and caution; by a due cultivation of the present moment, and by a wise provision against the future. "*Watch therefore*,"—the Saviour of the world enjoins you to vigilance.

Is he not your faithful Shepherd—and does the Guardian of Israel either slumber or sleep? Is not his *example* a sufficient test of the sincerity and importance of his *precept*? Shall the great Creator and Redeemer of the world incessantly keep watch over us, so that not a hair of our heads can fall without his permission—and shall we be heedless and false to *ourselves*?

My brethren, *he* is the vigilant and faithful Christian, and attends to the precepts of his Lord and Master, who searches into his own heart: scrutinises every action in its source and its tendency: plucks away pride: roots out concupiscence: banishes folly, and shuns evil communication: puts a guard upon the door of his lips, and a seal upon every passion and mental infirmity. In his intercourse with mankind, he unites meekness with resolution, and humility with confidence: if

he deserve, he shuns not punishment: if he merit, he refuses not reward. Equally free from canting hypocrisy and shameless impudence, he mingles the feelings and indulges the hopes of a Christian in conjunction with the avowal and defence of those rights which appertain to him as a member of civilised society. He has a bosom that feels for all. His smile is not denied to the innocent and happy: his tear is not withheld from the poor and oppressed: he feels, alternately, the luxury of joy and of grief. Such is the watchful, wise, and prudent Christian, as connected with *society*; let us now, lastly, view him as connected with his GOD.

He has lived, perhaps, to see every friend laid low: or he has lived to be deprived of almost every patrimonial comfort that was held out for his youthful anticipation. Does he murmur at this distribution of things? No: he knows that the hand which smites to-day, may to-morrow be lifted up to heal. He knows that the journey of this life is, at best, short, broken, and rugged: he therefore looks beyond this bounded valley of misery, and solaces his heart with the view, which hope paints, of the sunshine of another world. He sees the wicked triumph, and the

vicious prosperous: but this neither staggers his faith nor disturbs his repose. This scheme of things is but a very small link in the chain of the Universe; and he pretends neither to know its formation, to supply its seeming deficiencies, or to correct its seeming disproportions. That mighty spirit which suspended the sun and the moon in the immensity of space, must be too wise and too potent to suffer these terrestrial evils to endure without correspondent good: and therefore the watchful Christian waits till all seeming irregularities be cleared up in the judgment to come.

Finally, he leans upon the code of revelation, upon the promises of his Saviour, as the shipwrecked mariner clings to the rock which lifts its adamantine sides above the raging element below!—So that, secure in the promises of Christ, watchful of the *future*, as well as of the *present*, and grateful for the past, he waits with humility, with resignation, and with fortitude, for the arrival of the BRIDEGROOM:—who shall call him to be clothed with the wedding garment, and to sit down at the feast of the Lamb, 'midst the angels and archangels of heaven.

SERMON XXV.

ST. JOHN, iii. 9, 10.

*Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?**

THE private conference between our Saviour and Nicodemus, is a remarkable instance of the triumph of an enlarged and enlightened mind over the sophistry and absurdity of dark and bigotted principles. In applying the instruction to be derived from this incident in our Saviour's life, I shall first make a few remarks upon the character of Nicodemus, and the conversation which he urged; and, secondly, draw such inferences from the whole, but more especially from the words of my text, as may be productive of sound

* Trinity Sunday, 1814.

knowledge and scriptural comfort to every one now assembled to hear God's word.

In the first verse of this chapter, (as you have heard in the Gospel of the day) Nicodemus is called a "Ruler of the Jews." He was, in fact, a teacher in the Jewish *Sanhedrim*, or great national council, and of the sect of the Pharisees. St. John is the only evangelist who notices him; and from *his* description, Nicodemus appears to have been a man of some intellectual ardor, and more curious than the generality of his brethren to become acquainted with the real doctrines of Christianity. Impressed with this feeling, he was determined to apply to the fountain-head for information. But fearing that his colleagues might learn of his visit to our Saviour, if he paid it in the open day, he waits the coming on of night: when, secure from prying curiosity, and public observation, he steals to the abode of Christ; and quietly and pertinaciously resolves to be informed of the doctrines and principles of that *new* religion which was beginning to spread so widely throughout Judea.

Like an artful disputant, he begins by praising and flattering his opponent, that he may the more quickly be thrown off his

guard, and less suspect his real intention:—"Rabbi," says he, "we know it is generally understood, and there seems indeed to be little doubt, but that thou art really a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." Our Saviour, not waiting for further general remark, or complimentary adulation, strikes exactly at the root of the subject matter to be discussed:—"Verily, verily, I say unto thee," says he, "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." This observation, so new, and so apparently contradictory, startles the learned member of the Sanhedrim; and he replies, sarcastically perhaps, "Can a man enter the *second* time into the womb and be born?" "Jesus observes," (illustrating his former position), "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God—that which is born of the flesh, is flesh; but that which is born of the spirit, is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again: the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the

Spirit. Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?"

The first thing observable in the address of Nicodemus, is, the silence with which he passes over the excellency and power of Christ's doctrine, to change the hearts, and reform the lives of men. He only alludes to the *miracles* by which such doctrine was confirmed. Like the ignorant and perverted mind of man in all ages, pomp, and splendor, and power, and extraordinary occurrences, are alone regarded; while the silent but sure principles of a peaceful, and quiet, and virtuous disposition and conduct, are treated with disregard or contempt.

Our Saviour thus replies to the first observation of Nicodemus respecting his miraculous powers. "Verily, I say unto thee, this acknowledgment of my working miracles will not be sufficient to render any one a member of that kingdom I am to establish, unless he be renewed in his mind, will, and affections, by the operations of the Holy Spirit, and so become a new creature, and see and enjoy the blessings of the kingdom of God." In answer to the Jew's question of the apparent

impossibility of a man's being born again, Christ observes, "Unless a man be born again of water, and so become one of my disciples by that baptismal regeneration by which your proselytes are said to become as infants new born; and unless he purify his heart from all worldly and carnal lusts, thus enabling him to live a spiritual life according to my doctrine, he cannot partake of the celestial transport of another world." I should observe to you, that it was a received maxim among the Jews, that wisdom is given from above—and that, when a man is a proselyte, he is reputed to be as an infant new born. Our Saviour's illustration of his position, appears to have excited visible astonishment in the mind of Nicodemus; for the former continues, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.—The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, and by that, art conscious of the thing itself, —but canst thou tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth?" So it is with every one that is born of the Spirit. The effects produced in him by that Holy Spirit, plainly shew a great and entire revolution in his principles, and he himself is conscious of it: but the operations of the Spirit, producing this change, are

not perceptible to others, nor is the renewed and regenerated person always able to perceive, and to distinguish *them*, from the inward workings of his *own* mind.*

The astonishment of Nicodemus now appears to have attained its height; when, no longer able to conceal his surprise and ignorance, he exclaims, "How can these things be!" Mark our Saviour's reply. At the moment he confutes him—at the very moment he triumphs over his narrow-minded antagonist, he makes his defeat more decisive and afflicting, by reminding him of his *relative situation* with his countrymen, "Art thou a *master of Israel*—Dost thou belong to the great Jewish Council—and is it to *thee* that the ignorant and unenlightened are to look up for information . . . and yet knowest not these things? I speak to you what is *known*, and testify what is everywhere acknowledged, and yet you are incredulous: but, if I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how can you possibly believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?"

From this important dialogue, my brethren, I purpose making a few reflections, which,

* Jortin.

by God's grace, may be instrumental in reforming or regenerating those principles of the human mind, which have become weakened by folly and vanity, or tainted with overgrown prosperity, wickedness, or hardness of heart.

First, from the example of Nicodemus, let us learn to beware of those idle, unprofitable, and merely self-sufficient studies and pursuits, which work not our present or future good. —This master of Israel, this expounder of Jewish rites and ceremonies, this profoundly learned member of the Sanhedrim, appears to have possessed the intellect of an *infant*, in regard to those things which operated to the attainment of salvation. The wondering student might have acknowledged the depth and variety of his erudition in the mysteries of cabalism; the listening multitude might have hung with rapture on his eloquence in the exposition and enforcement of Jewish creeds and rites; but, when this champion of earthly wisdom put himself in competition with the Saviour of the world, how, in an instant, did all his faculties become torpid, his wit repulsed, and his ignorance manifest! The light of Christianity was too vivid for his contemplation; it broke upon him with a

lustre which he had never before beheld, and put all his intellectual opposition to silence and shame.

And this must ever be the fate attendant upon merely speculative, abstracted, inconclusive, and unprofitable studies. Our secret chamber of meditation may be adorned by innumerable works of human wisdom. Every thing that is brilliant in fancy, and subtle in deduction—every effort of ancient and modern wit—all that pleases the gay, and gratifies the learned, it may be our lot to possess; but, if the code of our salvation be thrust forth from our notice, if the BIBLE be wanting, all our labors will be fruitless, and all our midnight watchings of no avail. We may, in this world, obtain applause for flashes of wit, or fruitfulness of fancy, or depth of research; but, in the contemplation of INFINITE WISDOM, we shall ever remain the dull cold inhabitants of a gross and fleshy tabernacle. Do we wish *not* to be *born again?* Do we prefer the body to the soul—the flesh to the spirit—this world to the next? God Almighty tells us, in the express language of his beloved Son, "Except a man be born of water and the spirit, (which expressions have been already explained) he cannot enter into the

kingdom of heaven." We may wonder at these things as Nicodemus did. That which appeared to the Greeks foolishness, and was a stumbling block to the Jews, by that alone, are we, as CHRISTIANS, to be saved. The choice is for us all to make. The nature of it has not been concealed; and it is the duty of every one seriously to examine into his own soul, so that he may become "*a child of God*, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven."

Rely upon it, that mere human wisdom; or what is called worldly learning, (such as Nicodemus appears to have only possessed,) cannot secure to us the reward of happiness hereafter. It must be guided, tempered, and sublimed by gospel truths. It must lose its savor, and perish, unless preserved by the salt of Christianity. The meanest peasant that tends his mountain flock; the most laborious husbandman, who has never wandered beyond the boundaries of his own fields; or the most indefatigable mechanic who, day after day, and night after night, plies his severe and sickly trade—these men, if knowing, and believing, and practising, the truths of Christianity, are, in the eye of the God who created them, infinitely wiser and happier

than the *mere* student or teacher of sublunary knowledge... uninfluenced by, and unbelieving in, the precepts of the Christian religion. The applause of the world, capricious, fluctuating, and perishable as we know it to be, may flatter and elate us for a moment; but the conviction of conscience, in not seeking the approbation of our Maker, and not following the dictates of the Gospel of his Son; is a thousand times more powerful and operative in converting, in the end, all our pleasure into pain, and our triumph into defeat. Do we want examples to rouse our attention, and correct our vanity? Let us learn of the eminent characters of other times. The greatest and the best have acknowledged, in their latter moments, that in *ignorance*, almost all their researches have *terminated*. They knew this... that uncertainty and doubt closed almost every pursuit which they had cultivated. Warned by the example of such, let us, gifted with less talent, and perhaps less humility, exert all our endeavors to be born again; to be "born of the water and spirit," to be regenerated, and thus enter into the kingdom of God.

In conclusion, my brethren, if we say that we are Christians in word and in deed, let

us attend to our speeches and actions; for the infidel, or uninstructed pagan may well say, "Are we followers of Christ, and know not the language of modesty and humility, or despise the common rules of humanity and compassion?" Let us beware lest we stumble when we think we stand.

We have recently* fallen prostrate at the throne of mercy in prayer, in penitence, and in fasting. We have acknowledged ourselves to be humbled before Almighty God. We have beseeched him "to remember that we are but dust and ashes. We have called on him to enable us, by his holy spirit, to walk as becometh the disciples of his dear son, and to discharge, each in our station, our duties to our king and our country. And, above all, in every dispensation of his hand, whether it be of prosperity or adversity, to make us ever to lift up our hearts above this lower world to his heavenly kingdom, where pain and sorrow, and war and hatred shall be no more, and where alone true joys are to be found." Impressed with these solemn sentiments, let us examine ourselves whether we repent seriously and

* Alluding to a late fast.

truly of our sins? What errors we may have committed in private, and of what offences we may have been guilty in public life? Is pride banished from our hearts? or is levity banished from our homes, only to be practised at public festivals, at public amusements, or in the House of God? Are we followers of Christ, and know not the enormity of these things? Have we strove to keep under our depraved habits and rebellious lusts? Have we sought succor from heaven, by fervent prayer, by the sighing of a contrite heart—when adversity assailed us, or fraud, or malice, or revengeful hostility, deprived us of our dearest rights? Have we kept God's holy Sabbath, and resolutely purposed to lead a new life? Have we befriended the needy, solaced the poor in spirit, protected the meek, bound up the wounds of the heart-broken, and strived, as much as lay in our power, to pour the light of revelation over a darkened mind? Do we pretend to be followers of Christ, to be disciples of that Master who bled for our redemption, and not to know the value and importance of these things?

But I trust, and hope, and believe, that the proper cultivation of both *earthly* and

heavenly things is not altogether banished from your bosoms: that, convinced of the emptiness and fallacy of mere worldly wisdom, your hearts are touched with a conviction of searching for those truths which are only to be found in the GOSPELS OF HEAVEN: that, disdaining the glittering tinsel, or dull dross, which appears to have solely occupied the attention of Nicodemus, *you* feel resolute and determined to explore the fountain-head of that stream, which shall conduct you to the rivers of immortal life.

The prize is glorious, as the task is difficult. But faint not: recollect who has gone before you, and borne your burdens and infirmities. The cross of Christ, the sole emblem of a Christian soldier, is planted upon the walls of the citadel of the New Jerusalem. Enter within the same; and you shall find a treasure, which the most sanguine imagination cannot conceive, and which, in myriads of ages, shall neither be diminished, nor impaired.

SERMON XXVI.

ROMANS, xii. Part of v. 2.

"*Be not conformed to this world.*"*

As the apostolical labors of St. Paul were, beyond measure, more abundant than the rest of the teachers of Christianity, and as the communities which he endeavoured to convert were formerly of the first rank and importance in the political world, it should follow that his anxiety to wean these communities, from the vices and sensual indulgencies too frequently attendant upon such an advanced state of civilization, would mingle itself in almost every thought, and be expressed in almost every page of his Epistles. With this feeling, he exhorts *the Ephesians* "not to walk according to the course of this world; not to live the rest of their time to the lusts of men, but to the

* December, 1805.

will of God;" and in the concluding words of the verse from which my text is taken, he says to the *Romans*, "be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."

If, my brethren, we are conformed to this world, *entirely and exclusively*, it is impossible for us ever to be acquainted with the "perfect will" or the perfect "peace of God." But so strangely are terms *now* perverted, and such magical illusions seem to hang about the world which we inhabit, and the society in which we move, that there is a class of beings, whose greatest praise and highest honor seems to consist in the acquirement of a title, directly the *reverse* of what the holy Apostle commends; namely, to be thought MEN OF THE WORLD. This is the emphatic distinction which they are so emulous to obtain: this the only reward for all the toil, bustle, and probably artifice and intrigue, with which it is too often acquired.

To the character of a *man of the world*, as we see it in general exemplified, it is my intention to direct your present thoughts: for the subject has such strong claims upon your attention, that almost every hour of your

existence, you find it necessary not to be forgetful of it. "*What will the world say,*" and "what will the world think," are expressions that for ever escape our lips. Thus are we obliged to confess that we think of *ourselves,* with reference to our *fellow-creatures,* more frequently than with reference to Almighty God, our CREATOR AND REDEEMER.

I shall premise my remarks on this comprehensive subject, by observing, that a knowledge of the world, in many of its bearings and tendencies, is not here meant to be censured or despised. To shut our eyes upon all rules of order, and all regulations of decency and decorum, which are invariably attendant upon true civility and politeness, is not meant to be inculcated: and though there may be *some* regulations, which appear to be rather ceremonious than sound: *some* rules of observance which savor more of formality than correct judgment; yet, inasmuch as they are *negative* and harmless of themselves, and are generally united with customs that have solid sense and practical utility in their formation and application; it is not worth the pains of a grave, and wise, and pious man, to distress himself, and others about him, by introducing innovation in

things so secondary and unimportant. It is the *depths of the human heart,* and not the surface of mere ceremonies and customs, which require the probing touch of the spiritual physician.

But to revert to the character of the man of the world... whose rigid observance of the rules prescribed by what are called the more *polished classes of society,* constitutes his first and principal merit. This, when young, gives him a passport to mingle with his elders. The charms of intellectual refinement weigh little in a bosom thus panting for courtly distinction, and the applause of the fashionable and gay. The solid benefits resulting from the perusal of works of genius, of piety, and of general moral excellence, are treated with contempt before the splendid but specious allurements that invite him from every flattering and inconsiderate quarter. The mischief is, that, in these quarters, he too frequently meets with *commendations* on the plan of life which he has chosen; and thus, under the supposition that his views are correctly formed, does he indirectly receive a sanction for every vice which may taint the human heart. It is in truth a great misfortune, which seldom

fails to accompany a course of life thus injudiciously commenced, that the most artful, cunning, and the basest intentions, readily mingle in a situation so favorable for the execution of every nefarious scheme: for the violation of honour, and the extinguishing of every generous sentiment. A man, purely cheerful and polite, will not, on such grounds alone, (unless by the most fastidious of stoical judges) be considered criminal in the eyes of his God, provided this cheerfulness be tempered by seasonable abstraction and meditation, and confession of error, and hope and prayer for pardon. But as gaiety, and an observance of certain exterior forms and ceremonies, which the higher orders of society have prescribed for their own practice, constitute one of the *first* articles in the creed of a *man of the world*, can we be surprised that—with such slender qualifications to become a useful member of society, in its solid and comprehensive sense—many a dark and dangerous character, with politeness in his deportment, but mischief in his imagination, is let loose to prey upon mankind?

Such an one, therefore, in his first connections, finds it necessary perhaps to assume a rational demeanor. He is acquainted with

families where there is some observance of seriousness and Sabbath duties; and where the Bible is not considered as a merely *convenient ornament for shew.* He finds it expedient to harmonise for a while with this order of things, which, in his heart, he so thoroughly despises. But every relaxing moment is anxiously looked for, when, in the unguarded ear, he can whisper such bitter sarcasms as, at first, startle from their *boldness,* but ultimately are reflected upon from their novelty. He then ridicules what he cannot comprehend: and paints in vivid but treacherous colors, the unalloyed happiness of those who are no longer fettered by such grave laws, or constrained to perform periodical worship. "God, (saith the worldly seducer) hath created us for our happiness; and we must find this where we can, for thus shall we fulfil the purposes of our creation." Hence, religion, in which was found a balm for every wound, and a consolation midst all the distractions of a turbulent and treacherous world, is at first considered as an insufficient source of comfort; and afterwards, perhaps, as a well concerted system of imposition. It is unnecessary to pursue the painting of such a picture. The "last state" of

such a melancholy victim to worldly treachery, must assuredly be "worse than the first."

But there are *other* scenes in which human beings, significantly called "*men of the world*," mingle, of a different and less difficult nature than the last described. They direct their attacks against *morality*, if they cannot pull down *religion*: and they imagine that such attacks may be successfully made, because there are a thousand unguarded passages through which they may circulate the poison of their principles. The respectful homage which is accustomed to be paid, in early and virtuous youth, towards parents, and pastors, and masters—the reverential awe with which God's holy name is pronounced by the meek, and modest, and sensible young person—are the first objects, on which a man of the world, who has none *other* but worldly principles, fixes upon, for his ridicule and censure. And he is sure to give, in his own conduct, a thorough exemplification of his ideas upon these subjects: for both his God and his Parents are treated by him with the same volatility and disrespect. Thus familiarised betimes to a disregard of our Maker and Parents, is it matter of surprise that we listen with eager de-

light to *other* tales of treachery, with which this knowledge of the world will readily furnish an artful character? Can we be astonished that the young man has lost that timidity and reservedness, the earnest of future excellence—or the young female, that blush of sensibility which is at once the sign and safeguard of her innocence—in the open and unqualified indulgence of every species of dissipation, and every species of folly, which must terminate in wretchedness and ruin? Alas! did we know but one half of the dreadful truths which exemplify the fatal tendency of an unreserved acquiescence in purely worldly schemes, urged by knaves in the disguise of what are called *accomplished characters*, our very souls would melt within us; and we should, in the touching language of the Psalmist, water our couch with our tears, in reflecting upon the wickedness of mankind.

There are yet *other* circumstances in which a man of the world, purely as such, may produce great mischief in society, without debauching morality, or trampling religion under foot. He may introduce ridiculous and childish customs and ceremonies. He may induce us to consider merely secondary,

as *first,* pursuits. He may create so many artificial wants and passions, that it would be difficult to say what wealth would satisfy, or what situations would content us. When we wept or smiled, it might be doubted whether we really felt sorrow or pleasure. In short, he might teach us to consider the variety and splendor of dress, the fatigue and pomp of visiting, the extravagance and misery of sensual indulgences, and the unceasing round of what is emphatically called *polite dissipation,* as the only substantial and sensible pursuits worthy of the enjoyment of a rational being. And perhaps, as the reward of such meritorious conduct, when old age crept on, and the grave stared us in the face, our senses might be awakened to tell us, that, as we had lived the ridicule and contempt of the enlightened part of the community, so we shall die forgotten as we lived despised!

Let us, however, as the last point of view in which the limits of my discourse will permit me to consider the character of a man of the world, suppose, that he may *not* have fully acted up to the foregoing representation of his conduct—as described in ridiculing all religion, secretly sapping the foundations of virtue and morality, or decidedly encourag-

ing a love of dissipation, and dress, and riot, and sensuality... In what, then, is such a character culpable? It is both culpable and criminal in keeping constantly from the views of others, A WORLD which awaits us BEYOND THE GRAVE: a state of immortality:—for we may fairly take it for granted, that, when the conduct of an individual is marked with such traits, as lead us insensibly to conclude that he has *no* thoughts of *another* world, such an one must not be considered as a fit associate for the good, or a wise counsellor of the ignorant. His secret moments must be moments of disgust or vexation, or they must be moments of heart-withering despair. In spite of the studious effort to wear a face of pleasure with a heart of pain, there must be the *dull* yet *bitter* pause from the tumult and uproar of an intoxicated world. Need I add, how many a fair and promising character, who hath commenced life with justly founded hopes of success and reputation, by his relatives and friends, hath, from a promiscuous indulgence in merely worldly engagements—from a fond and fatal inclination to mingle in every dissipated and worthless pursuit—ultimately sunk as low, as once he had hoped to soar high!...

and terminated perhaps, with his own hands, an existence, which once promised a long and brilliant career of virtuous happiness?

Or, if this fatal end be not the result of such a career, consider the subject in one more, but almost equally serious, point of view. Look around you in this great metropolis, and mark how many *charitable asylums* remind you of weakness in the one sex, and of perfidy in the other. When a fellow-creature hath gone astray—hath been enticed and entangled in the very nets of wickedness which have been systematically laid for her destruction—what is generally the result, on the part of the seducer? Compassion, mercy, and protection? No:—neglect and desertion: and yet this seducer may be emphatically distinguished as a most *accomplished man of the world!* His wit is perhaps applauded by the ingenious, and his address commended by the gay. And when this miserable being, whom he hath led from the paths of virtue, and deprived in consequence of the means of honest subsistence, finds the hand of death pressing hard and prematurely upon her—will his heart feel for her distress? Or, if it should, what are his sources of con-

solation? Will he open the BOOK OF PRAYER, and supplicate heaven to forgive them both, and entreat for final happiness hereafter, through the merits and intercession of a Redeemer? How can such an one fulfil such a duty?—how execute a task in which he has never been disciplined? In truth, HE cannot know how to appreciate *eternity*, who hath uniformly disregarded and perverted *time*!

My brethren, are these reflections founded purely upon theory? Are they hypothetical, or are they built upon truth? Your own experience, your own observation, must furnish you with instances, wherein characters, emphatically called *men of the world*, have shewn even a decent exemplariness in the exterior duties of religion; have been strictly correct in their intercourse with the virtuous of both sexes, and rigidly adhered to limited rules in their indulgence of social happiness; and yet, secretly, and in their hearts, have contemplated all religious and serious duties as vain, or ridiculous, or inefficacious; and believed mankind to be, generally, nay almost universally, without principle and without worth! Are there are not *some such* hollow and insincere characters as these?... men, whose conduct

you cannot impeach for a violation of the prescribed laws of polite society—and whose transactions have been marked even by what is called integrity and judgment?

Yes, there *are* such characters—wholly and determinedly "CONFORMED TO THIS WORLD"—but under the tuition of such, what sensible heart and enlightened mind can hope to attain that first of all wisdom, the wisdom of everlasting salvation? All generous sentiment, all benevolent feeling, all the ardor of piety, and all the consolations of devotion, soon wither and decay in such a chilling atmosphere. The world is a *world of distraction*—the grave is an *abyss of despair!*

May God Almighty, in his infinite goodness, guard and protect us from adopting such a crooked and dangerous line of conduct. May he never lead us into such temptation, but deliver us from so great an evil. Engrave therefore, my beloved brethren, the precept of the Apostle deeply in your hearts. Be not unreservedly and unqualifiedly "conformed to this world." Consider the whole present race of created beings but as wanderers and sojourners, "as their fathers were." Look seriously forward to that long home, whither we are all daily and hourly hasten-

ing; and with the last throb of the sinking heart, and with the last accent of the trembling tongue, convince those that stand round your death-bed—and whom you have long and dearly loved in this life—that there IS A GOD who ruleth in wisdom and equity, and a paradise, which he hath assigned for those who die in his faith and fear!

SERMON XXVII.

MATTH. xi. 28.

*Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.**

THE conciliating language which the Gospel of Christ at all times holds forth, is in no instance more forcibly evinced than in the verse of which my text is composed, Ever anxious to reclaim men from their errors and vices—ever watchful of the present, and solicitous for the future welfare of Christians—the Shepherd of Israel never seems more happy than when he is calling his wandering flock back again to their fold, and leading the repentant sinner into the paths of holiness and peace. "Come unto me," he exclaims, "all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will refresh you"... that is, all ye that labour under the weight which the Jewish rites

* November, 1811.

and ceremonies impose, or that groan in spirit from the agonising oppression of sin, or that are drooping under unmerited afflictions, or unexpected adversity; come, all ye that are thus heart-broken and vexed, come within the pale of my religion, and be enlisted under the banners of my Gospel . . and ye shall find *rest to your souls.*

So speaks the Saviour of the world. Such is the language which we have read in his Gospels for nearly two-thousand years; and yet, as if they contained not one syllable of truth, or held out very inefficacious remedies for our ills, the greater part either do *not chuse* to listen to the invitation, or, if listened to, treat the purport of it with heedless contempt. And why, my brethren, is it thus? It is because there is, on the other hand, a *more powerful seducer* who is importuning us to come unto him. It is, because Satan, in the character of *worldly pleasures,* tells us to approach him, and we shall find a more welcome rest. "Come unto me," says THE WORLD, "ye that despair and are afflicted, and I will administer consolation to your vexed spirits: vanity shall charm, luxury shall fascinate, and intemperance shall intoxicate: upon my soft and gilded couch no

thorns are scattered, and where I appear with smiles and exhortations, melancholy is banished, and unlimited and inexpressible transport take entire possession of the heart."

So speaks the charmer, the world—in opposition to the wise, the consoling, and the truly beneficial doctrine of CHRIST: and thus it is that we fly from the one, and embrace the other.

It shall be my object in this discourse to shew the superiority of *Christ's imitation*, to the allurements which the world holds out, to give "rest to our souls." And first, we may observe upon the words with which the verse opens.

"Come unto me," says Christ. Now, whatsoever may be meant by the condition of this invitation, it is expressed in such gentle words, that we have no reason to be dismayed at it, or to treat it with scorn. To come to Christ, is to acknowledge him, to believe in him, to be persuaded in particular of the efficacy of his promises. These, surely, are no hard terms; but, on the contrary, are sufficient to make us *approach* him, at least, with alacrity and cheerfulness.

The invitation therefore, as far as respects

the *manner* of coming unto Christ, seems to be at once frank, unqualified, and most encouraging. It is express as to approaching our Saviour nearly, or intimately: not coldly contemplating him at a distance, but imparting into his bosom our very wants and wishes. There is to be no disguise on our part, because the unqualified manner in which we approach him can never be productive of harm.

What, on the other hand, is the language of the invitation of the world? It says, also, "come unto me;" but how is the diffident and sensible man disgusted in the very mode of approach? What ceremonies, what cold and crooked forms, are to be observed? What suspicions on both parts frequently attend the introduction?... and what little encouragement is given to a truly delicate, humble, and virtuous character, to impart all its cares and concerns, and disemburden itself of the load of sorrow and anxiety, which is often pressing down and breaking the heart?

In the second place, we will consider to *whom* Christ's invitation is given? To those that *labour and are heavy laden:* that is, to those who are constantly engaged in the

faithful discharge of their duties in this world, and are heavy laden with the cares, anxieties, and miseries, which frequently and unavoidably attend the discharge of them; or who are overwhelmed with a reflection, that their errors and failings are of a nature too gross for pardon. *These* are they to whom Christ's invitation is given: not to the slothful or volatile; not to the calm, easy, and indolent character, who thinks, without the least bodily or mental exertion, that he has laboured abundantly in Christ's vineyard—nor to the ingenious sophist, who has an excuse for every folly, and a palliative for every crime—*not these* characters, most assuredly, does our Saviour call upon to approach him; but the meek and afflicted in spirit—the conscientious, the upright; the heavily oppressed, whether poor or rich—or whether mechanic, labourer, or prince. These are they whom Christ calls upon to "come to him," in a manner the most unfeigned and unqualified. Now, what is the conduct of the world upon this occasion; and what are the characters to whom its invitations are given? Not to the slothful, you will say, because the slothful, in the nature of things, cannot prosper. But

what *laborious* class then, of human beings, does the world invite to approach and partake of its enjoyments? Why, it is either to those who are *busied* in scenes of profligacy and folly—those that labour to accumulate wealth—not for the purpose of enriching their families, or helping to support the thousand poor creatures who now roam upon the wide surface of the world, in weariness and fasting, in nakedness, in poverty, and in hunger—but for the contemptible and unmanly object of viewing their accumulated stores, and of thanking God that they are not, like other men, tempted by poverty to steal. These the world encourages to an approach: because, in too many instances, wealth is power, and poverty is allied to misery and neglect. The world also tells those who labor in a perpetual round of folly and dissipation—to win the short-lived applause of a day—to approach and partake of its enjoyments. With the world, that man who has invented some new code of fashion or etiquette—who has labored to make the forms of society more novel and complex, and thus to abridge its comforts in proportion—with the world, such a trifling, such an *indolent labourer* meets with satisfac-

tion and smiles. Virtue is an empty sound here!—and to "go about doing good," is called that *affectation of a religious character* which it spurns with contemptuous pity and indignation.

But is not the world an encourager of the *heavy laden?* And does it ever refuse characters, of such a stamp, admission within its circle? Certainly, it has not this cruelty to be taxed with; for let a man be ever so heavily laden with sin and crime, or with frequent and gross violation of moral conduct, he will be sure to find enough in the world who will say "Come unto *us*, and we will give you rest!" That is, in other words, there is no situation in which a desperate man may not find a hope of protracting his iniquitous career; while he is determined to set aside every principle connected with the religion of Christ.

Thus differently do CHRIST and the WORLD call upon mankind to approach them. Let us now, in the third place, and as the latter division of this discourse, shew the *consequences* of this call.

Our Saviour says, "*I will give you rest.*" Those who know the sacred and divine cha-

racter of him who thus promises rest; (and all such I hope, and believe, I am now addressing) those, I say, who are acquainted with the character of our Redeemer, through the medium of his Gospel, will never doubt the sincerity of his promise, or its efficacy when realised. The rest, which our Saviour offers, is indeed most consoling and durable. We shall enjoy it in this world; but more amply, and therefore more perfectly, in the world which is to come. He comforts the broken heart; he blesses the meek and poor in spirit; he encourages the zealous; and he crowns the good. If the prospect of life be darkening upon us, "come unto me," says Christ, "and I will cause it to be brightened by the hopes and promises of my Gospel." If the proud and unfeeling one treat us with contempt and disregard, we have only to take shelter under the healing influence of Christ's wings, and our infirmities shall be strengthened, and our exaltation secured. If any one here present should be "disquieted" under the gloom of speculative opinions, or be fearful of the inefficacy of his actions to attain everlasting salvation let him duly weigh the promises and assurances which our hea-

venly father, through his Son Christ Jesus, hath made; and he will find, that, by perseverance in well-doing, by continued acts of mercy, benevolence, and virtue; he shall, in the end, obtain the prize of a Christian's high calling. Again, do our friends forsake us, or do domestic misfortunes embitter our repose? There is, in the BIBLE, a cure even for this severe malady. "None of them," says the Psalmist, "who trust in God, shall be desolate." And equally true is it when Job observes, "If we obey and serve him, we shall spend our days in prosperity, and our years in pleasures; our soul shall be at ease."

And indeed, in no situation, in no crisis, are we shut out from the mercy or rest of our Saviour. Whether upon the bed of disease or of death, his mild and encouraging voice still exhorts us to have patience, and faith, and fortitude. At the moment, even, when the departing spirit is flitting round the body which it once loved to animate—at this moment, the sincere Christian hears the rapturous invitation, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." So speaks the Redeemer of mankind.

Now, my beloved brethren, what is the language of the world we inhabit? What says

man to his fellow-creatures? And what is the *rest* which a Christian is to enjoy in this tumultuous and ever changing scene? After exhorting us to approach, after importuning those who labour and are heavy laden to sacrifice every thing to *its* interests, will the world offer to us the rest which the Gospel offers, or will it furnish us with appropriate wings to take our flight into an unknown and never ending state of existence? Ah!—ask only those who have travelled far into this valley of life, darkened with misery and affliction; ask those who have seen friends and fortune vanish in an instant; who have seen unsuspecting innocence abused, and virtue trampled under foot; who have seen profligacy exulting at the very havoc it has made, and who have shuddered at the fearful sights which rage, and violence, and madness have created;—ask *these*, if the world be not a deceitful flatterer—or if the rest, which it proffers, be not, in too many instances, a bed of scorpions or of thorns?

Let man attain the highest of human luxury and domestic comfort: let his schemes for a while be eminently successful: let plenty and gaiety sit at his board:—still he is dissatisfied—still the world allures him astray.

Unhappy and pitiable!...he perseveres till he sinks only deeper and deeper in daring speculation and chimerical schemes. The spell is suddenly dissolved: the fairy vision vanishes: and what is the result? Premature, horrible dissolution!*

Believe me, this is not the studied language of fiction or of exaggeration. It has been the uniform complaint of the wise and the good, from the moment when sin and Satan were introduced into paradise. We have all erred, and "fallen short of the glory of God;" but, in proportion to our depravity, appears the mercy of heaven in the great work of Christian redemption. The night of misery becomes illumined by the promises of Christ, and the burden of sin becomes somewhat lightened by the offer of rest which his Gospel holds forth.

It is the peculiar excellence of the Gospel, that it alone can pacify the conscience, and give ease to a mind that labours under the solemn and weighty care of reconciling itself to God. The world hath nothing of the kind to offer; but, on the contrary, the more we

* The above concluding observations were founded upon too notorious a fact!

become slaves to it, the more we become strangers to our Maker; and the further we stray from that flock, who are to be collected together in the last day by the great shepherd of our souls.

In conclusion, my brethren, do you believe in this representation of things? Or have Christ and the world been falsely depicted to you? If you *do* believe in it, strive to act up to the spirit of this belief: not by words, not by professions, not by promises only... but in deed and in truth. As surely as there is a God who reigns above, and as certainly as a future judgment awaits us all, will be the ultimately miserable lot of those who have sacrificed Jehovah to Baal, and substituted the world for the Gospel.

Come therefore unto Christ, in *this* state of existence, and so shall ye approach him in *that* which is *never to have an end.* Lay open your sorrows, your cares, your anxieties; confess the weight of your sins at his altar; partake of his sacraments: and so shall ye find "rest and comfort to your souls."

See how little there is for a rational man, even in this world, to covet; but how far less for a *religious* man to desire?! Let but a few short-lived years pass away and who,

in this temple of worship, shall be found doing homage to their Creator? Our eyes will have been closed for ever upon the "day-dreams" of this life, and a series of events are to ensue, for which possibly we may have made no spiritual provision, but prepared ourselves only by ingenious experiment and fallacious calculation. With *some*, more than with *others*, (according to the common occurrence of human events) the world is passing away, and ETERNITY is dawning upon their view. It is for *such* to place their hands upon their hearts, and say, whether they have found that pure, unsullied, delight in the world... which would induce them to relive their days, and to retread their steps? But small indeed would be the number disposed to make this confession.

In such a case, therefore, *Christ* is substituted for the *world;* and as this fickle scene is passing away, the serious believer, and the truly zealous and active Christian, looks up with that conscious assurance which the practice of faith, hope, and charity inspires; and acknowledges that there is no other protector like unto God; that there is no Redeemer which can do as he doeth; and that there is

no REST so sweet, and so durable, as that which he administers to the faithful.

With sentiments like these, may we all, by the grace of God, quit this world for another, and pass from time to eternity.

SERMON XXVIII.

GAL. vi. 7.

*Be not deceived: God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.**

THE epistles of St. Paul are not arranged, in our translation of the Holy Scriptures, according to the order of time in which they were written; but according to the importance of the communities and persons to whom they were addressed. It is allowed by learned biblical critics,† that the *Epistle to the Galatians,* from which my text is taken, was the earliest epistle written by St. Paul; and although the precise period of its composition cannot now be ascertained, it is nevertheless extremely probable that it was penned between the Apostle's departure from Galatia, and his departure from Thessalonica;‡ per-

* February, 1807.

† Among others, by MICHAELIS.

‡ BENSON supposes it to have been written at Corinth, a short time before the Epistle to the Corinthians.

haps during his journey; and in a place where no Christian community had been formed.

The fire and energy which distinguish this celebrated Epistle to the Galatians, may be thought to be a sufficient proof that it was not composed when the Apostle had attained a very advanced period in life: for, comparatively with the rest of his Epistles, it evinces an acuteness of argument, and a vehemence of invective, which are no where else found in so express and positive a manner. But the Apostle had good reason for the exercise of the character of a stern and determined monitor; and he appears resolved not to disguise the crimes, or diminish the danger, attendant upon the Galatian community. The Galatians had, in short, been corrupted by some desperate and enterprising seducers; who had inculcated on them the necessity of observing the *whole* Levitical law—including not only circumcision, and an abstinence from all meats deemed unclean, but also an observance of all the Jewish festivals, and even of the Sabbatical year, which was never designed to be observed in any other country than *Palæstine.* Nor is the picture which St. Paul has drawn of the Galatians the least exaggerated; for it appears, from the Jewish

historian Josephus, that this sect might have been described in a still more odious light. It was, in fact, the same sect which involved the Jews in that fatal war, which ended with the destruction of Jerusalem; for they incited their countrymen to disobedience against the Roman Emperor, and to a refusal of the accustomed tribute. Under the mask of piety, they committed rapine and murder, even within the walls of the temple: and their impetuosity was such, that they not only disrespected the power of the Romans, but seemed fond of provoking that punishment, which ultimately buried their religion and polity in ruins.

The Apostle St. Paul, throughout the whole of this Epistle, seems never, for one moment, to lose sight of the actual condition of the community which he addresses. Convinced of their corruption and carnal mindedness, he plainly tells them what they must expect from the practice of such detestable principles. The works of the flesh, says he, are sufficiently manifest, and they are these: "Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revel-

lings, and such like; of the which, I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." These are the dreadful consequences of following the lusts of the *flesh*; and the Apostle has painted a picture as bold as it is just and original. But in order that these miserable carnal fruits may appear still more terrific in their delineation, he contrasts them with that beautiful picture which he has drawn of the fruits of the *spirit*; of the consequences of leading a virtuous, pious, and religious life. "The fruits of the spirit," says he, "are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law:" that is to say, against such neither God nor man hath forbidden the practice and enjoyment.

Within a few verses of the text, St. Paul seems also exceedingly zealous to put down all self-sufficiency, and all temporising with vice and folly. "Let every man," he observes, "*prove* his own work, and then he shall have rejoicing in *himself alone*, and not in another. For every man shall bear his own burden. Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth

in all good things." And then the Apostle emphatically remarks, in the words of the text, "*Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*"

More important words, or more important doctrine, was never pronounced by human lips. There is nothing in it evasive, nothing doubtful, nothing sophistical, or obscure. The plain bold truth is laid down to the Galatians, and they are exhorted, importuned, to attend to it: for their eternal salvation or perdition depends upon its observance or neglect. And do we suppose, my brethren, there is nothing in *our* condition that renders us amenable to that moral and religious tribunal, to which the Apostle was so anxious to bring the *Galatians?* Do we suppose that eighteen centuries have passed only to accomplish our uncorrupted state?... only to shew on what superior ground we stand, and what resplendent virtues adorn the modern periods of the world? "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

Let us now consider the force and application of this weighty injunction. First we are told, not to be deceived—not to suffer our

vain and foolish thoughts to lull us into a fatal acquiescence in the supposed merits and virtues of our conduct. How dangerous, and yet how general, is self-deception! The most secluded hermit, the most abstracted philosopher, and the gayest and most unprincipled votary of pleasure, each, in his particular pursuit, thinks his own conduct the wisest and best. The former reckons upon the rigidity of his abstinence both from physical and social comforts; the second on the depth and difficulties of his studies; and the third on the rapturous and vehement delights which a world of variety and vanity holds forth; as the surest means of obtaining substantial bliss. But do they each consider, that, in their several pursuits, they stumble upon palpable error, or become tainted with incorrigible vice? Does the *hermit* consider that seclusion from society, that the rigid observance of unmeaning fasts and excruciating bodily punishment, only serve to steel the mind against the impressions of benevolence, and to shut out from the heart all access to tenderness and pity? Are we to look into the excavated cell, or gloomy cloister, for a race of pure, placid, and virtuous human beings, who know how to enlighten the mind, and

mend the heart? Are we to say, *these* are the mortals who have found out the road to holiness; who practise virtue and religion; who do not *deceive themselves?!* Alas, I fear it will be found, that where such studied sanctity dwells, there, deceit and hypocrisy abound. Such men, however, even with the best intentions, deceive themselves; for if they know not some of the crimes of life, it is certain they are strangers to many of its innocent joys and rational comforts.

But does the *philosopher* also deceive himself? Does he, whose abstract and profound studies seem to indicate a communion with superior and immortal spirits—is *such* an one practising a system of self-deception? Yes, he surely *does* practise a system of self-deception, who, in his admiration of *effects*, forgets the *cause* from which they spring! He is a deceitful and criminal character, who, wrapt in the mysteries of science, or entangled in the mazes of literature, keeps out studiously from our view the almighty and all gracious source of every moral, social, and intellectual perfection: for, in the very midst of this philosophical meditation, man is secretly at work to supplant the Deity. In the fermentation of his thoughts, there too frequently

settle, at the bottom, the dull, gross, and poisonous particles of scepticism and infidelity. Hence learning and science are too often explored, with no purer design than to make man the lord of that world—upon which, compared with his Creator, he only creeps as a diminutive and impotent insect!—while HE who sitteth in the heavens, "shall laugh him to scorn."

But does the *votary of pleasure* deceive himself? Does the man who partakes of sensual delights follow a system of self-delusion?—Or how can it be, that, where such splendor, and gaiety, and apparent happiness prevail, the seeds of deception should lurk at heart? Unquestionably this species of the human character does most grossly deceive itself. For what, I ask, is the termination, even in this life, of such flattering but perilous pursuits? Ask the man who has grown old in dissipation; whose grey hairs should have served to kindle every serious and sober reflection; ask him, what is the sum, what the amount, of days and nights of frivolous and unmanly engagements, of sensual and criminal indulgences? He will tell you that it is vanity of vanities: the worst of follies: the most incurable madness. For when he stands

upon the brink of the grave—when he looks down on the dark and gloomy receptacle in which his ashes must shortly repose—and when the spirits of his departed ancestors appear before him, warning him of the state into which he is shortly about to enter, what, my brethren, must be his sensations, his fears, his terrors, his despair? Then he thinks of the child of innocence whom he hath caused to go astray!.. and of its parents whose hearts he has broken. But such a picture need not be painted in stronger colors. It is sufficient that we know a character of such a cast must most fatally *deceive himself.*

But why does St. Paul tell the Galatians not to deceive themselves? It is, because God will not be mocked. It is because that Almighty Being, unto whom all hearts are open, and from whom no secrets are hid, will not be derided and insulted; and because none of our actions can escape his omniscience. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked." No;—that powerful, and just, and merciful Being, who formed the universe from nothing; who, in man, gave a semblance of himself; and in the earth created every thing for his nourishment—that great and good Being, who expects us not to act unworthy of our

high calling, cannot, will not, be deceived, mocked, and set at nought. What he hath done, that shall stand fast for ever. What he hath said, that shall as surely be effectual; for *his* fiat is fate—his blessing is life everlasting—his curse, perdition irretrievable! Does the criminal, in this world, tremble at the sentence of the judge? Does the fettered victim to his country's violated laws look with hopeless eye on the fate that awaits him, and see, with horror, the certainty of punishment?—of *that* punishment, which, now, no cunning can evade, no vigilance elude, and no strength repel? Shall we, then, think, to escape the penetrating and faithful eye of an omniscient GOD? However we might have once indulged hopes of freedom from pain and punishment, we now find that such hopes are fallacious; that the sentence is passed; and the judgment must be put in execution. So must it fare with every human creature in this world, with respect to the Deity. There can be no subterfuge, no concealment, no delusion. That voice—which Adam heard when walking in the garden, and from which he thought to fly, hiding himself amidst the trees of paradise—that voice.... is still potent, still awful. It is heard

by the miscreant who has trampled upon every law human and divine. It is heard by the noonday robber, and by the midnight assassin. It pursues the betrayer of innocence; the seducer of morals; the libeller of religion. It sometimes, like the flash of heaven, melts the stony bosom of the wretch, whose perfidy has ruined his friend, and whose profligacy has beggared his family! Let us not hope therefore to mock God with impunity; for we may not only hear his voice in this world, by the stings and goadings of conscience, but may hear it, in the world to come, more loud and terrible than was the thunder on Sinai's Mount!

I shall conclude this discourse by making a few remarks on the latter part of the injunction contained in the text: "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

This is a metaphorical but a very strong expression. As the fruits of vegetation will be good or indifferent, according to the comparative excellence of the seed, so will our fate *hereafter* be according to our merits or demerits in *this life*. Whatsoever we sow here, that we shall reap in eternity. As the husbandman is anxious to procure the soundest seed for the production of the finest

fruit; so let us, my beloved brethren, display equal and more anxiety in regulating our conduct according to the rules of morality and religion—for, what should be the anxiety for the enjoyment of an abundant but perishable harvest, compared with that for the enjoyment of celestial transport? Let us sow that good seed, which, neither falling upon a rock nor among brambles, shall secure to us a harvest in the kingdom of heaven. Recollect, you may plant, and the preachers of the Gospel afford salutary advice; but Christ alone giveth the increase. You may also act well, and religiously; and yet, in this world, reap sorrow and bitterness of heart —but remember, your good actions, and your faith in Christ Jesus, are seeds that can only ripen into harvest in the world which is to come. *That* is the harvest for which alone a Christian should sow; *that* the only remuneration which is worthy of obtainment.

As we have used our talents, so will be our future felicity. And it is for man to consider —it is for us, who bear the express image and likeness of our Maker, to reflect, whether our qualifications—which may be turned to the most splendid uses here, and to still more glorious ones hereafter—it is for us to consider,

whether we chuse to regulate our conduct according to our *understanding* of things temporal and eternal!? The Gospel is before us. We may all read the book of life. There are but two ways pointed out; and those so plain and palpable, that the meanest intellect can discern them. Life is on our right hand: death on our left. Felicity and destruction are opposed to each other. As we chuse, so must we abide the consequences of our choice: "*as we sow, that shall we also reap.*"

SERMON XXIX.

MATTH. v. 4.

*Blessed are they that mourn.**

WHOEVER has been accustomed to meditate seriously on the letter and on the spirit of the *inspired writings*, must have been frequently struck with the opposition of the sentiments contained therein, to those of merely *human compositions*. In no one sentiment perhaps is there a more striking variance, than in that which is contained in the words of my text. If the world were to salute us, and to assign blessings and comforts to individuals, it would say—"Blessed are those who *rejoice* and are *wealthy*, and are distinguished for their *prosperity*: blessed are those who sit with the gay and the great; and who enjoy the applause and distinction of their fellow-creatures." But, my brethren, the language of the GOSPEL is not the language of the

* February, 1809.

WORLD—for Christ says, "Blessed are they that *mourn*, for they shall be comforted."

What we have translated *blessed*, some ingenious scholars, according to *their* comprehension of the original Greek word, have translated *happy*: but whether those that mourn are to be blessed, or rendered happy, the doctrine is equally striking, and equally remote from what human creeds have ventured to recommend. Let us see, therefore, upon what grounds it is, that "those who mourn are to be blessed."

We seem to be placed in this lower world with appetites which require to be cautiously regulated; and with passions, which, if not held under continual discipline and subjection, would hurry us on to the commission of the most absurd or atrocious actions. Our Saviour well knew this; and he also knew that, as nothing was so apt to poison men's minds, and to prevent the very end for which they were created, as one undeviating tenor of *good fortune*; so, on the other hand, nothing would more effectually conduce to their working out their salvation with fear and trembling, than *sorrow*, distress, disappointment, and affliction. He says, therefore, to such who might be supposed to have exhi-

bited symptoms of discontent on their uniform disasters, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." We all know that our blessed Saviour never spake those things but what he really felt, and believed to be the truth; and we must also not forget that, on this particular subject, he was himself "a *man of sorrows*, and *most intimately acquainted with grief*." Such an authority, therefore, calls upon the distressed in spirit not to be disconsolate; but to take courage; for they shall be comforted.

Afflictions of various kinds is the inevitable lot to which mortal flesh is heir. And inasmuch as we are persuaded that these things cannot come to pass without the ordaining of the deity; so we must, as believers in his power, and as children of his protection, voluntarily confess that these are for our good. "It is good for me," says the Royal Psalmist, "that I have been afflicted, for then I learnt thy law: I knew the value of thy testimonies —they were before bitter unto me, but now they are sweeter than is the honeycomb."

My brethren, do we all think so? Do we all coincide, and say, blessed are those that mourn? Examine your hearts, and declare, whether they do not rather stimulate you

with the feeling—"fortunate are those who *never knew sorrow!*"

It is, in truth, to say the least severe thing, but a short-sighted view of our condition here below, thus to be anxious to flutter only awhile in unbounded transport, and unclouded prosperity: for, in the midst of all this, how is the heart prepared for another state of things?—how, too, is the heart prepared against a probable reverse of things in *ourselves*, and a positive reverse of them in *others?* Be not deceived. Sorrow itself, like the medicine which is to work the cure, is sufficiently bitter; but the effects of that sorrow, that medicine of the soul, are most salutary and sweet.

"Blessed are they that mourn." They have known what it is to see human presumption distressed, and human calculations rendered abortive: they are wise, and happy, and blest in consequence. When sin assaults them, they do not hesitate whether or not they should embrace it; for, in such a conflict, both the soul and body may die. They instantaneously reject it; because they know that the retention of it will lead to consequences subversive of their soul's welfare. Over such, the powers of darkness can, comparatively, prevail little.

"Blessed are they that mourn:" for, as every thing in this world is liable to alteration, such changes of things find *them* prepared for their occurrence. It is not so with others. It is not so with those who have uniformly basked in the sunshine of prosperity, and consumed the greater part of a little life in the enjoyment and encouragement of pleasurable trifles. But why are not these blessed or happy? Because man, in such a state, is as a pampered steed, which forgets the generous hand by which he is fed. Adversity arrives; perhaps death follows hard upon. But where is the blessing? It is gone with Lazarus into the bosom of Abraham: whilst the other's perturbed spirit, is ever anxious to give his brethren caution, "lest they also come to the same place of torment with himself."

Thousands and tens of thousands are the blessings which await the solitary *mourner*. Humanity, mercy, peace, a quiet and subdued spirit are the inmates of his home. Have *others* met with disasters of which they dreamt not of? Are they shipwrecked in their fortunes? Who will pity them? Who will shew them a sure, or at least a cautious way, by which their vessel may ride out the

storm? Will *they* do it effectually who have *never known* what affliction of this nature is? No: the former resort instinctively to the sympathetic heart; and they find such a heart beating in the bosom of the mourner. Is not the mourner, therefore, rendered *happy*, or, in other words, *blessed*—by such an opportunity of assuaging the afflictions of the distressed?

Again: sickness, and its attendant, sorrow, assail us. Who will feel for, and comfort us? Those who have mourned in a similar situation. They will press us to their hearts, and will receive from us the eulogy which Christ himself hath conferred upon them: "blessed art thou, for the comfort which thou hast imparted unto my fainting soul."

Once more. We lose our relatives or friends: here our feelings are most acutely excited, for their losses cannot be replaced. Whither shall we fly for succor? If our own hearts afford nothing—if the habit of duly reflecting upon death, and on a future state, be not familiar to us—how are we to receive consolation? and who, like the compassionate Samaritan in the parable, will pour oil into our wounds, and administer wine to our fainting spirits? Those who

are acquainted with *sorrow*, will be our only comforters then: and while we are thus soothed, and feel the exquisite happiness of such sympathy, shall we not instinctively acknowledge that our Saviour spake the genuine language of truth when he exclaimed, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted!"

And what could the *world*, in its common acceptation, administer of such a desirable nature? The gay, the strong, the lively, the healthful, and the affluent may, in *their* estimation of the word, be more blessed and comforted; but how transient, how precarious, and how inefficient are all *their* comforts, and boasted enjoyments, compared with the sure, steady, rational, and religious feelings of those, who have been nurtured in the school of affliction, and who, with their Redeemer, have, in consequence, exercised the noble virtues of fortitude and resignation!?

Perhaps it may be said that these pensive and solitary virtues beget a gloom and melancholy; and, ultimately, moroseness and austerity. They may do so. But oftener they produce other and better fruits. At least they are productive of *this good*: they tame the fierceness of our passions, and do

not hurry us out of the world as victims to what is called—*honor*. They do not plunge those, who are to survive us, in wretchedness and sorrow. Our wives and our families are not called round us, on our death-bed, to witness the anguish of mind, and the distracted tone of language, which too often mark the departure of the impetuous and the head-strong! We have time and disposition to make our *peace with God*, as well as our last worldly arrangements, before the vital spirit has ceased to animate the body.

Thus much as regards the truth of the text considered with reference to our fellow-creatures; or, in other words, thus much for the propriety and excellence of a sorrowful spirit, as it administers consolation to *others*. Let us now consider it in a more absolute point of view:—as it affects *ourselves*.

The Gospel prepares us for sorrow; because it knows that we are born to it as the sparks fly upwards. Christ says we shall be happy if we are afflicted; because, in both cases, our natural habits and propensities are so gross and unreasonable, that *affliction* only can modify or tame them.

Our feelings, according to nature, are incompatible with our hopes and expectations

of another world. If we look at futurity only through the medium of our sensual affections, or in one undisturbed tenor of prosperity, it is greatly to be feared that we shall draw false conclusions; inasmuch as the medium through which we view is dense and deceptive. Sorrows and afflictions come to illumine this darkness; to correct these defects; to extirpate the ill consequences that result from them. At first, we bear afflictions grievously. We are rebellious; and question the wisdom and the mercy of heaven's decrees: but, by and by, these boisterous feelings subside; and, in contrition for our manifold offences, and from conviction of our ungrateful opposition, we voluntarily and cheerfully even kiss the rod which is lifted up to heal while it smites! So thinks and so acts the rational Christian; in whom misfortunes, of whatsoever kind they may be, have produced right effects. And rely upon it that such an one is blessed and comforted in the fullest acceptation of the term: for as eternity is prized beyond time, and as heaven is preferable to earth, so will be those feelings which have taught him to affix a correct meaning, and to put a proper construction upon every sublunary occurrence. A soul

thus attuned, as it were, to heaven's own harmonies, knows not what it is to cherish the dark and crooked principles, and little meannesses, which human creeds often inculcate; and while others—rich in possessions, high in rank, and courted from influence, pass by in the plenitude and vigor of health, and enjoyment of what are called worldly comforts—rest assured that such a soul, tutored in true Christian resignation, feels rather pity and compassion, than envy or impatience:—and why? because God only occupies and fills its thoughts: the creature is forgotten in the Creator:—man is lost in his Maker!

But I may be probably addressing *some*, upon whom the storm of adversity has beaten so hard, or over whom misery and misfortune have so long held dominion, that, worn down by their afflictions, they are disposed to sorrow as "men without hope." Now it is to such that Christ emphatically says, "Come unto me—wipe away your tears—throw off your burdens—and ye shall find rest to your souls:" that is, be stedfast and confident in my power: shew this stedfastness by deeds as well as by words—and, in the end, ye shall find *that rest* where alone

it is worth obtaining—in the "kingdom prepared for you above."

My brethren! is it the part of a loyal or a brave soldier to *murmur* at his leader, if sudden vexations or discomfitures arise? On the contrary, are not cool courage, and steady discipline, in the hour of disaster, among the brightest qualifications of a veteran? You know that they are; and that men have acquired what is called immortality by such conduct; because, very wisely, there is thought to be more talent, and trial of patience and fortitude, under repeated disasters, than in one undeviating course of victory. What, then, is the inference which must be immediately drawn? Why, that we can praise each other, and think well of ourselves, for enduring *this* species of hardship with fortitude and cheerfulness; and yet, under the dispensations of heaven, in the common *campaign of life*, we are to be fretful, disobedient, and revolting!—and conceive that no sort of merit, and no degree of comfort, is to be attached to an endurance of those afflictions which come *from above!* Allow that this mode of reasoning is both preposterous and criminal; and acknowledge, ye that have endured sorrows with patience, whether they

have not, upon the whole, softened the roughness of an impetuous disposition, and taught you better to know yourselves, and to be more nearly acquainted with your God? Indeed they *must* have this tendency, if they have taken root in an honest and uncontaminated heart. They must convince such, that our blessed Saviour never delivered a more beautiful, or more appropriate sentiment, than when he said, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

I conclude therefore by exhorting all those to whom the natural turpitude of man, and the just precepts of the Gospel, are equally apparent, to consider, in themselves, and in others, that afflictions are sent for their trial: and that CHRIST himself could only be "made PERFECT BY SUFFERING."

Can *we*, therefore, hope to escape what befel the Son of the Most High God? Is it on the score of our *virtues*, or on the plea of our infirmities to bear them, that we claim an exemption from afflictions?—or rather, how comes it to pass that we can readily bear up under the weighty pressure of *sin*, and yet find the gentlest disappointment of our hopes, or the most trifling denial of the

gratification of our passions, a burden intolerable to bear!?

My brethren—what, let me beseech you, what is this but hurling defiance at our Maker, and trifling with the everlasting welfare of our souls? The Bible says you must expect, and you must bear, sorrow and affliction; and, to comfort you, Christ says you shall be "blessed if you sustain them as it becometh you."

Depart with other and better sentiments. If you are *poor*, there is a rich inheritance prepared for all who die in the faith and fear of God, laid up for them in heaven. Let not, therefore, *poverty alone* render you wretched. If suddenly deprived of wealth, consider that, in this precarious state, the wonder may be that you have met not with this loss before; while others have found it at a more advanced period of life, with larger incumbrances, and less means and less strength to bear up against such a calamity. This will sooth your irritabilities; and teach you that the gloom of affliction, however dark, is not deprived of every ray of consolation.

Lastly, if *death* hath laid low those whom your soul loved, consider that this stroke hath

been inflicted, in order to teach you to set your affections upon objects more likely to gratify a Christian's high expectation: that here, all is transitoriness and trouble; and by infusing into your hearts that degree of sorrow which such a loss excites, it prepares them, at the same time, to be better instructed in those truths and principles which may qualify you to meet your departed relatives and friends, in that place where sorrow never can have place.

Thus, my beloved brethren, in whatever light you may be inclined to consider the important subject inculcated in the words of my text, may you always acquiesce in their consoling efficacy; and exclaim, with their author—"*Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.*"

SERMON XXX.

MATTH. xv. Part of v. 22.

Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David.

SUCH is the pious ejaculation of a soul deeply touched with a sense of its miseries, and addressing itself to the Sovereign Physician to be healed and comforted. It is the prayer of a woman of Canaan, who cried unto our Saviour to have mercy on her, for her daughter was grievously vexed with a devil. She persisted in her entreaty, notwithstanding the rebuke of the disciples. She came and worshipped Jesus. She prayed, from a conviction of his power to heal. Her faith was great, and it was done unto her "even as she wished."

From these words, I purpose calling your attention to the necessity and efficacy of PRAYER, and to consider what are the chief

excuses for the general neglect of it. Having of late directed your attention to a series of discourses upon that *form of prayer* which the laws of our country have prescribed for our observance; and having dwelt somewhat minutely upon the leading features of our most excellent LITURGY,* it should seem to be no uninteresting or unappropriate continuation of those discourses, if I now called your attention, in an equally earnest manner, to the *obligation* and *efficacy* of prayer itself. †

In the present condition of man, PRAYER is not only his first duty, but his greatest consolation. For, if the world in which we live, be a state of continual temptation—if the situations in which we are placed, and the objects by which we are surrounded, appear but to lull us the more securely in this fatal enchantment—if riches corrupt, and indigence enervate—if knowledge puff us up, and ignorance lead us astray—in short, if, since our original fall, every thing begets

* Six Sermons, or Evening Lectures, were preached at Brompton Chapel upon the Church Service of this Country.

† The above Sermon upon PRAYER is a free translation (with additions and alterations) of Massillon's celebrated Sermon upon the same subject.

new perils and alarms—in a condition so deplorable, what hope of salvation can animate us, but that of a humble and unfeigned prostration before the throne of mercy!—an unreserved confession of our errors and crimes, and an earnest entreaty to have them blotted out and forgotten!

How comes it then to pass, my brethren, that a duty so essential, and even so consoling to man, should in these days be in so many instances neglected, or considered as a sad and irksome task? Whence arises this too frequent forgetfulness and abuse of prayer? *Two* excuses are in general offered as a justification for the omission or inefficient performance of this duty; and they are these:—1. We do not pray, because we pretend *not to know how to pray*.—2. We *now* neglect it, because, in the *former* exercise of it, we suffered our minds to wander on what we thought to be more interesting subjects; and consequently deemed it both insipid and insupportable. *Ignorance* and *indifference* are therefore the two principal causes of our neglect of prayer; and these it shall be my duty particularly to examine and shew the danger of.

First, then, of *ignorance*. This ignorance

takes its rise from the three following untoward traits of our disposition.—1. We are deceived in the idea we form of prayer.—2. We are not sufficiently convinced of our wants and necessities.—3. We have not a real affection for the Almighty. These are the three causes from which our *ignorance* of prayer arises. Let us therefore particularly discuss them.

We are deceived in our idea of prayer. Prayer, my brethren, is not any particular effort of the mind: any peculiar arrangement of ideas; or penetration into the mysteries and councils of God. It is a simple emotion of the heart: an ejaculation of a soul deeply affected by a view of its own corruptions—a secret and lively sentiment, from a conviction of our wants and weaknesses, and a humble trust reposed in Almighty God to obtain deliverance from them, by his gracious interposition and power of healing. Prayer does not presuppose, in the penitent, a mind gifted with any extraordinary endowments, preternatural lights, or a knowledge deeper or more varied than that of the generality of mankind. It only supposes faith, and the evidence of that faith—by the practice of moral and religious duties. It only requires com-

punction, and an ardent desire to be liberated from temptation and misery. It is not a *secret* or *science* for men to learn—an occult art, to be acquired by consulting dexterous and proficient masters. No, my brethren; prayer is a duty which we were *born* with *adequate capacities* to fulfil. The rules of it are written in our hearts; and the Spirit of God is the only Master that can successfully expound them.

A mind, truly sincere and innocent; moved by a contemplation of the power of the Almighty; checked by the fear of his judgments, but comforted by the assurance of his mercies; adoring the decrees of his providence, and accepting, without a murmur, those crosses and afflictions with which he sometimes visits his creatures;—such a mind as this *irresistibly adopts a form of prayer* from a consciousness of its own imperfections. It is sorry for sins committed. The remembrance of them is grievous; the burden of them is intolerable. A mind of this spiritual stamp is a thousand times more instructed in the science (if it *must* be so called) of prayer, than all the merely learned and industrious commentators who have illustrated the Bible. Worldly institutions may confer degrees of

priority and honour; but nothing more. They cannot make the profane pious: they cannot soften the stony bosom of the atheist: nor can they wash out the scarlet dye of our sins! The subtle disputant may display skill and ingenuity in his theological disquisitions, but he is not thereby the better gifted for that first of all religious effusions... the EFFUSION OF PRAYER!

Who instructed the poor woman of Canaan to pray? A stranger, a daughter of Tyre and Sidon, ignorant of the laws and the prophets, and who had only heard from the lips of our Saviour the words of eternal life—she, who was thought to be sitting in the darkness of ignorance and death—nevertheless, she prayed. She did not address herself to the *Apostles* to learn of *them* the rules of prayer: her affection, her confidence, the desire to be heard, taught her to pray; this touched her heart, and constituted all the beauty and sublimity of her prayer.

If, in order to pray, it were necessary to be elevated to an extreme pitch of enthusiastic rapture—if it were necessary to be transported, like Moses on the holy mountain, surrounded with a cloud of glory and seeing the Almighty face to face—if we must enjoy

these, or similar, rare and extraordinary gifts, in order to pray with efficacy? then may we say, as the new converts said to St. Paul, "We have not received such gifts, and are ignorant of the spirit or power which confers them."

But prayer is *not* a particular gift, reserved only for certain privileged orders. It is a common duty for all to practise. It is an indispensable virtue, like *charity*: from which none are too high to be exempted, and none too low to be debarred. It is, in short, the perfection of human nature, and is attainable by all men.

When the disciples requested our Saviour to teach them to pray, what were *his instructions?* What was *his* form of prayer? Did he talk to them of the height, and depth, and sublimity of the mysteries of God? He taught them only, that to pray, was, to address the Almighty as a tender, benevolent, and all-watchful parent: to use a familiarity mingled with respect: a confidence tempered by fear and love: to speak to him of our weaknesses and miseries; to use such expressions as our *heart* only dictated—not to endeavor to elevate ourselves to *his* height, but to beseech him to condescend to *our* humble and levelled condition, to shew him our wants; to

implore his help; to wish that all men may adore and bless his holy name; that he would come to establish his kingdom in our hearts; that his "will be done in earth, as it is in heaven;" that sinners may return to the ways of justice—infidels to the knowledge of divine truth: that he would pardon our transgressions, preserve us from temptation, and deliver us from evil!

Such is the scope of the prayer which our Saviour taught. Every thing therein is simple, rational, and sublime. It calls man *to himself;* and, in order to imitate such a model, we have only to know our wants, and to beseech the Almighty to supply them.

This, therefore, brings me to the *second cause* of our ignorance of the means and object of prayer; which is, that we are *not sufficiently convinced* of our wants—that we know not the sins which beset, or the miseries which enthral us.

My brethren, need we instruct a sick man to ask for cure?—an hungry man to ask for bread?—or the tempest-beaten mariner to seek for shelter? Necessity stimulates supplication: the want provokes the wish for supply: silence is eloquence. Make the application yourselves. You, who know not how to

pray, when, in your temporal concerns, any unexpected disaster occurs, any frightful malady threatens you with the deprivation of property or life, then, do you not lift up your eyes and hands to heaven!? Then, your prayers spontaneously ascend—your *heart* teaches you that consolation which the pride and stubbornness of *intellect* had withheld. You then exclaim, in the energetic language of the Canaanite, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David!"

If we felt the miseries of the *soul*, as we do those of the *body*; if everlasting salvation interested us as much as does our poor temporal good fortune—then should we become sufficiently dexterous and proficient in the knowledge of prayer. We should not complain that we had nothing to say in the presence of our Almighty Father, of whom we have so much to ask: we need not be subject to constraint when we wish to converse with him; our imperfections would supply us with words; our very hearts, in spite of us, would break forth in pious ejaculations!

Is it possible we know not what should be the object of our prayers, or have not a sufficient sense of the evils which beset us, and the blessings we may implore? Cannot we

pray for the conversion of our enemies, the well-doing of our friends, our neighbours, our pastors and masters? Or, the reformation of those, in whom, perhaps, *we* have been the cause of error and crime?—of those, whom *we* may have formerly led astray from heavenly truths by our derision of piety, and our mockery of religion?—of those, whom we have betrayed by our counsels, or seduced by our examples? Or say, my brethren, cannot we pray with thankfulness for the hitherto prolongation of life, and preservation of health—the latter, that inestimable blessing, without which riches seem but as a mockery, and life is an irksome pilgrimage. Have our families, also, no claim upon our devotions to God? May we not beseech our heavenly Father that the *absent* may be under his especial protection—that those who are *present* with us may live to be a blessing and comfort, and make smooth our passage out of this transitory life? Cannot these great and interesting and touching motives furnish us with the means of efficacious prayer? Every thing that surrounds us, teaches us to pray. Every object, every event, affords us new occasions to elevate our thoughts towards God. Society, retirement, good and bad men; public and

domestic incidents; the misfortunes of some, and the prosperity of others—all that we behold in this world might furnish us with subjects for prayer, and motives for religious conduct.

Every thing instructs our faith; every thing excites our zeal, animates our piety, and recalls our gratitude: and yet, in the midst of such and so many subjects for prayer, we know not *how to pray!* The Almighty, in whom we live, and move, and have our being; who is every where, and all that we can desire or wish for—this great and gracious Being cannot inspire us with one strain of thanksgiving, one thought of reverential gratitude!? Let me seriously ask you, therefore, if the Almighty can dwell in a breast *so full of ingratitude* towards him? Little indeed must be our affection towards a master and friend, with whom we are so shy and reserved in our communications!

But this brings me to the *third* cause of our not knowing how to pray; which is, that, however we may think or profess the contrary, we have NO REGARD for God. We do not love him with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our soul, and with all our strength. Where there is a sincere regard,

the heart soon knows how to approach, and hold converse with the object of its esteem. It need not seek that from *afar*, which should be *instinctively* communicated to it.

My brethren, let us adopt, if I may so speak, a new system of things—a new disposition—and let us substitute God for the world: and then shall we be no longer strangers to our Maker. It is our unruly passions which alone incapacitate us from prayer. How can we ask for eternal blessings which we disregard? how meditate on heavenly truths, for which we have neither inclination nor taste? how address a deity whom we scarcely know? how solicit favors, of the value of which we are ignorant? how be delivered from passions, which we acknowledge to rule us with a pleasing dominion? In a word, prayer is the language of pure unfeigned *affection* towards Almighty God, our Creator and Redeemer; and we know not *how to pray*, because we know not *how to love* our Heavenly Father.

Some have asserted that this indifference or want of affection during prayer, arises from sensations which we *cannot control;* and that we are therefore less amenable to censure from the influence of passions, which we

know not how to regulate and subdue. Now one of the greatest afflictions attendant on our present sinful state, is, this *very indifference* in regard to prayer. Man, in his original state of innocency, found his chief happiness in discoursing with his God. All creation was to him a volume, in which he meditated on the works and wonders of his Almighty Father. His sensual affections, under the guidance of reason, never could wean him from the cultivation of so delightful and profitable an intercourse. His whole life long was a continual contemplation of truth; but all this delight, all this happiness, would have instantly ceased, had the Almighty withdrawn himself from his view.

Corrupted indeed must be our present state, and strange the alteration which sin hath made, when we find what should constitute our chief delight, to be among our greatest vexations. Too many there are who carry within them a *secret antipathy* to prayer; and the disgust which attends the performance of it, is the universal pretext for forbearing to pray. Even characters of virtue and integrity, instead of considering prayer as a grateful duty, are sometimes apt to complain of the inattention and indifference

which accompany it. The moments devoted to it are regularly shortened; and the sooner it is over, the sooner they conceive themselves liberated from an irksome penance.

Nothing, in truth, is more unjust than to abandon prayer on account of the indifference which renders it disagreeable. But this indifference takes its rise from the three following causes: 1st, from the criminal indolence or infidelity of our lives: 2ly, from the little practice we make of praying: and, 3ly, from the wisdom of the Almighty, who proves us, and tries the sincerity of our hearts, by withholding for the *present* the accomplishment of the object of our prayers. Let us therefore, by God's blessing, discuss these three causes of our indifference and inattention during prayer.

First then, our lives are corrupt, or our principles are tainted with infidelity. Is it not absurd and unjust to suppose that we can pray with a serene and tranquillised spirit—with an imagination freed from vain phantoms—or with a heart touched with the conviction of divine goodness—when our lives, apparently virtuous to man, are wholly sinful before God?

My brethren, how can we, living in the

flutter of vanity, or the vortex of dissipation, taste and see how good and gracious is the Lord? For if even solitude be insufficient to still the stormy passions; to repress the unhallowed wanderings of the spirit; if even some of the most eminent fathers of the church, absorbed in the gloom of the remotest retirement, complained of the treachery of the human heart—how can we, immersed in pleasures, or poisoned by infidel principles, expect to find a sweetness and tranquillity in prayer? God and the world, mammon and righteousness, are incongruously associated. To taste the one, we must renounce the other. To enjoy heavenly consolation, we must be cleansed from worldly pollution. How can GOD find a place which is occupied by the *creature?* Heaven and earth cannot concentrate in the same spot. When the Israelites, after passing the river of Jordan, partook of the fruits of the earth, the manna ceased to fall: as if celestial and terrestrial enjoyments were not to operate at the same time. "And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the corn of the land, neither had the children of Israel manna any more."

When we complain of apathy and indif-

ference during prayer, we seem to forget that it may be our *dissipated habits* which produce such sensations. If we would wish to be serious and collected, we must *bring with us* a serious and composed spirit. Our intercourse with the world, our observation of the passions, follies, disquietudes, and crimes of mankind, should furnish us with serious reflections to awaken our faith, and call forth our gratitude towards our heavenly Parent.

But let us now be sincere—and let us only give to truth the justice which she claims. On those days wherein we have conducted ourselves with a due regard to moral and religious duties; wherein we have made some sacrifice of our humors and caprices, indolence and inattention; and have ushered in the morning and the evening with prayer and thanksgiving to our Almighty Protector;—on *such* days have we not felt a peculiar serenity and satisfaction? and are we not ready to confess that they are numbered by us among the wisest and happiest of our lives?

Do we not contemplate with cheerfulness the eyes of a master whom we have faithfully and effectually served? and is it not better to receive his *commendation* than *reproach?* Assuredly, then, there is no consolation superior

to that which is derived from the performance of our duty towards our heavenly Master, in respect to prayer and thanksgiving.

The second cause of this indifference and apathy in regard to prayer, is, that we are *sparing* in devotion. We dislike to pray, because we *seldom* pray. It is only the *use* of prayer which calms, by degrees, our perturbed spirits; which can efface impressions produced by an intercourse with a vain and giddy world; and which can alone disperse all those clouds and tempests that seem to lower upon our minds, and to darken and obstruct the visiting ray of heaven. We must solicit more than *once*, or *twice*, or *thrice*, before the object of our prayers may be granted. We must throw ourselves unreservedly and unfeignedly at the feet of Almighty God, and implore and importune him for his gracious assistance. Depend upon it, the serenity, or the peculiarly congenial feeling, during prayer, are among the chief rewards in *this world*, attending the *exercise* of it. Our conduct, in this important part of Christian duty, must not be precipitate and capricious. We are not to pray, and then immediately afterwards indulge in gross worldly pleasures:—nor is prayer to be considered as a mere form

of words, to be coldly and formally repeated, and then forgotten. This is not prayer; nor did our Saviour so pray: nor can the Almighty be pleased with a sacrifice in which *Baal* is more worshipped than himself.

But, it may be said, how can one, in this busy and agitated world, find *sufficient time* for the proper exercise of this duty? For *what*, my brethren, is time given us, but to think upon, and occasionally to adore, its author and disposer? Have we no time to pray? Then have we no time to become Christians. For he who prayeth not, hath no knowledge of God; no spiritual consolation; no hope of bliss beyond the grave. Consider this futile and absurd plea a little longer.

Do we complain of the want of time in obtaining *worldly advantages?* Do we not entreat our friends to promote our interest? and do we not assiduously, and without even being checked by a first or second repulse, supplicate our superiors for patronage—for the enjoyment, perhaps, of situations, of mere indolence and amusement? And yet we have not absolutely time to hold intercourse with our Creator and Redeemer, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords! *Eternal salvation* becomes less worthy of our notice than sublunary and ca-

pricious enjoyments! We prefer a residence upon earth to a mansion in heaven. My brethren, make *yourselves* the proper conclusion to this argument; for I am sure you are already convinced of its fallacy and danger.

We are now to discuss the *third and last cause* of our inattention and indifference during prayer; and this is, that the Almighty may be supposed to permit it, either as a *test* of our *fidelity and perseverance;* or, as a punishment for our apathy and want of affection towards him. May he not cause us to expiate some of the criminal indulgences of this life, by making us suffer a bitterness and even agony of soul during prayer? Do we suppose we can pass, in *an instant,* from the pleasures of this world, to the enjoyment of spiritual comforts? Did the Israelites exchange the common food of Egypt, for that of a land flowing with milk and honey, without having, in the meanwhile, experienced all the fatigues and horrors of the desert?

We have, in truth, so long and so stubbornly opposed our Maker, that we cannot expect very readily to receive the marks of his favor and visitation. We have hesitated, doubted, and disbelieved so strenuously, that we cannot hope, in a moment, to experience

the consolations of prayer. God causes us thus to feel, in order that we may know what it is to set his ordinances at nought, and to doubt the efficacy of his Holy Spirit. Or, may he not cause this indifference and uneasiness, in order that we may sigh more ardently for the transports of a life to come? The Almighty, by exciting these unpleasant sensations, may be anxious to purify within us every thing that partakes of worldly lusts: so that truth, and virtue, and faith, and *affection* towards him, may form the basis of our thoughts and actions.

Let us not therefore, my brethren, suffer any temporary disgust or indifference to divert us from a *perseverance in prayer*. Let us subdue our wicked propensities. Let us accustom ourselves to frequent supplication—and let us not be dispirited if we do not *immediately* find our wants supplied and our wishes realised: but rather, like the woman of Canaan in the text, *persevere* in beseeching the "Son of David to have mercy upon us."

I shall conclude this discourse upon the duty and efficacy of prayer, by a few admirable observations of a late eminent divine, of great acuteness of perception and power of

reasoning.* His words are these: "Our Saviour continued all night in prayer to God: or, if you would rather so render it, in a house set apart for prayer to God. Here, therefore, we have an example given us, which we both *can* imitate, and *ought* to imitate. Nothing of singular importance: nothing of extraordinary moment, either to ourselves or others, ought to be resolved upon or undertaken, without PRAYER TO GOD: without previous devotion. It is a natural operation of piety to carry the mind to God, whenever any thing presses and weighs upon it: they who feel not this tendency, have reason to accuse and suspect themselves of want of piety. Moreover, we have for it, the direct example of our Lord himself: I believe also I may add, that we have the example and practice of good men, in all ages of the world.

"Again; we find our Lord resorting to prayer in his last extremity; and with an earnestness, I had almost said a vehemence of devotion, proportioned to the occasion. The terms in which the Evangelists describe our Lord's devotion in the garden of Gethse-

* Paley.

mane, the evening preceding his death, are the strongest terms that could be used. As soon as he came to the place, he bid his disciples pray: saying unto them, pray that ye enter not into temptation. This did not content him: this was not enough for the state and sufferings of his mind. He parted even from them. He withdrew about a stone's cast and then kneeled down. Hear how his struggle in prayer is described. Three times he came to his disciples, and three times he returned to prayer: thrice he kneeled down at a distance from them, repeating the same words. Being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly: drops of sweat fell from him as if it had been great drops of blood; yet in all this, throughout the whole scene, the constant conclusion of his prayer was—not mine, but thy will be done. As it was the most important occurrence which ever took place, so the earnestness of our Lord's prayer, and the devotion of his soul, corresponded with it. My brethren, scenes of deep distress await us all. It is in vain to expect passing through the world without falling into them. In our Lord's example we have a model for our behaviour in the most severe and trying of all occasions: afflicted, yet resigned:

grieved and wounded, yet submissive: not insensible of our sufferings, but increasing the ardor and fervency of our prayer, in proportion to the pain and acuteness of our feelings.

"But, whatever may be the fortune of our *lives*, one great extremity, at least, the hour of approaching *death*, is certainly to be gone through. What ought then to support us? What *can* then support us? Prayer: prayer, with our blessed Lord himself, was a refuge from the storm: almost every word he uttered, during that tremendous scene, was prayer; prayer the most earnest, the most urgent; repeated, continued, proceeding from the recesses of his soul; private, solitary; prayer for deliverance; prayer for strength; above every thing, prayer for resignation."

God grant that we may each, according to our opportunities and abilities, imitate this pious and perfect example—"Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy upon us!"

SERMON XXXI.

JOB, xiv. Part of v. 14:

*All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.**

THE book of Job, from which these words are taken, ranks among the most ancient as well as the most interesting of those of the Bible. Indeed so high is its antiquity, that some learned commentators have not hesitated to ascribe to it a period as remote as that, in which the *Pentateuch*, (or the first five books of the Bible composed by Moses,) was written: but on this head it is not material to dwell, since it has *other* claims to our attention than those connected only with its *antiquity*.

The beauty, the piety, the sublimity of sentiment which almost in every page characterise it, have very strongly affected serious and sensible minds. In few or no composi-

* August, 1807.

tions, ancient or modern, are the attributes of the Deity, and the works of the creation, more powerfully and justly developed. Job's descriptions of man, and of human life, are wonderfully strong and appropriate; and, perhaps, in no portion of his work are these descriptions more just and affecting, than in *that* from which my text is taken.

Wearied out by the malevolence of his persecutors, Job seems, in this chapter, to address himself directly to the deity—in meditation upon the shortness and uncertainty of this life, and on the mercies and restoring power of his Maker. All the similes upon the transitoriness of human existence, are at once correct, simple, and affecting.

But the words of my text have something in them peculiarly forcible and characteristic: so much so, that if your attention were to be directed to all the verses of which the Bible is composed, it might be difficult to select one, which contains matter of a more solemn and serious tendency.

These words may be divided into three distinct heads of consideration. First, all the days of our appointed time; secondly, the waiting; and thirdly, the awful change which in the end is to take place. Let us

therefore, by God's blessing, endeavour to discuss these serious subjects; and to profit by the reflections which may be made therefrom.

First, then, we have an *appointed* time. All our days are numbered. This, to *man*, is a very hard, and perhaps difficult doctrine to believe; but, with the *deity*, it is most true. All our future days, every moment of our subsequent time, is, as it were, *present* with Almighty God. Our days are numbered, our time is appointed. It is appointed for all men once to die, and, after that, the judgment—says the great Apostle of the Gentiles. But, *why* is this doctrine a difficult or hard thing for us to believe?—It is, because such a doctrine interferes with our pleasures, our passions, and future views. It is, because in the pursuit of gain, or in the search after mere sublunary happiness, we do not like to think upon the transitoriness and fickleness of this frail being. Such a thought stops the profligate man in his vicious career; it alarms the miser amidst his heaps of wealth; and it startles the sceptic in the height of his calculations upon the duration and perfectibility of human existence.

A common argument brought against this

mode of reasoning, or rather against the evil consequences which might flow from adopting it, is, that if men were always to be thinking upon *death*, their lives would be wretched to themselves, to their families, and to those who were more immediately connected with them. Now, all this would be very true, and therefore very improper, if it *necessarily* followed that the thought of death made the present moment of existence *wretched*. My brethren, it does no such thing; or rather, it does so only with those whose lives are equally a disgrace to themselves and to human nature. It does so only with the coward; with the slave to human passions; with the unbeliever in Christian principles. Men, whose lives have formed one tissue of absurdity, folly, or crime, may very naturally be afraid to think upon *that* period, in which, in the awful language of the text, a "CHANGE MUST COME." Is the innocent man fearful of being seized upon by the laws of the community?—While the administration of justice deals punishment to this, or death to that man—does it alarm *our* conditions?—Are not we quiet and undismayed?—And wherefore?—because we have kept our hands from mischief, and refrained our tongue from

evil speaking. Just so it is in regard to the question here discussed. Those fear not death, whose minds are unobscured by the horrid glooms of superstition, and whose consciences are untouched by the remembrance of having led a vicious life; and, even in this case, whose hopes and meditations are soothed by a stedfast reliance upon the mercies of Christ to redeem. Such men fear not the prospect of death. Such characters, although they know that their time is appointed, and their days numbered, look forward beyond present miseries, and anticipate dissolution only as the harbinger of everlasting happiness. The Christian, therefore, the sincere and undaunted Christian, knows that his hours are few and numbered; but, he knows also, that a change is to come, when he shall bless his maker for having so soon taken him from this tumultuous scene, to be at rest in Abraham's bosom.

I shall now proceed to the second division of my discourse, and consider what is meant by the word "*waiting*," as used by Job.

Undoubtedly this word hath a very significant meaning; and it would be extremely profitable for us frequently to dwell on its force and application. By waiting, I con-

ceive Job to have intimated a patient conduct, an equable mind, a firm hope, and an undeviating life of purity. My brethren, if we are convinced that our time is appointed, and if we are not dismayed at the prospect of death, are we disposed to *wait* till our change come—with the same tranquillity and fortitude, and faith in God, as seem to have possessed the character who uttered the expression?—Rely upon it, the expression is of the utmost importance, and therefore deserving of the most earnest attention.

To wait till our change come, is, to look forward to death, and to a future life, with calmness, confidence, and joy. To await the hour of our dissolution, is to lead such a life as will best prepare us for its arrival. It is in the power of every human creature, however poor, however crossed by the cares of this world, and disappointed in their fondest hopes—it is, I say, in the power of every individual upon the face of God's earth—to pursue such a conduct as will make him, like Job, patiently and properly wait till death consigns him to the grave. Blessed be the great author of our redemption, he has peculiarly enabled us to wait—even with greater hopes of future happiness than could have

possessed Job, unenlightened by the doctrine of redemption! Wait therefore, my beloved brethren; stand still and see the salvation of the Lord; view the ultimate triumph of mercy, of benevolence, and of the author of every good and perfect gift to man.

Wait, if fortune should frown upon, and friends forsake you—wait, and anticipate the moment when heaven is to be your portion for ever, and God your father, protector, and friend. Or, if death have deprived you of those whom you held most dear—if the partner or child of your bosom—if your oldest and dearest friends have paid the debt of nature before you—yet wait with patience, with fortitude, and resignation, till your own "change come." Surely, if there be one thing upon earth more consolatory than other, it is in the force and efficacy of this comprehensive word. Job, who was beset with every affliction and every misery, yet *waited*; yet resigned himself to the all-disposing and all-merciful power of his creator. And why may not we?—God is yet benignant; the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. He despises not the sighing of a contrite heart; and he binds up the wounds of the peni-

tent, and sincerely obedient and faithful Christian.

Having thus endeavoured to explain to you the meaning and force of the two first propositions of my text, I come now, in the third and last place, to dwell upon the remaining part of it: to call your most serious attention to those words which tell us, that a "CHANGE MUST COME."

Gracious God, how often and how thoughtlessly are these words pronounced! The truth which tells us that we are one day, and perhaps shortly, to exchange life for death, and this world for the next—is uttered by some with as careless a countenance, and as untouched a heart, as if this change were at an indescribable distance, and as if it were to be the *sure* passport from misery to everlasting happiness!

What *Job* understood by these words:—I mean, whether he meant to infer that a *future resurrection* as well as a *certain death* awaited him, is now merely matter of conjecture—learned men having taken quite the opposite sides of the question. But, how a *Christian* is to understand these words, can be *no* matter of conjecture or doubt. Their

meaning is too direct and awful in regard to *him*, to admit of one moment's hesitation or uncertainty.

The *first* change imported in these words, and as applicable to us, is DEATH; the second, RESURRECTION. And here with what benevolence does the conduct of the deity appear!

Man constantly sees a resemblance of himself in every flower, in every tree, and every season that rolls over his head. Fair is the morning's dawn, and bright and joyous does the sun rise to perform his appointed journey. We rise too, as alert and as joyous. We mark his track in the skies: from the purple mountain to the blazing ocean we see how wonderfully his course is regulated. Again we look, and a mist and approaching darkness prevail; one momentary gleam appears, and night shuts up the hitherto splendid scene! There is now neither tint nor color, nor the soft and beautiful varieties of light and shade. No, all is darkness and gloom: a CHANGE, an entire change, has taken place.

View here, O man, the picture of thyself, the representation of thy little day! Joyous is thy youth, and vigorous is thy manhood; and thou thinkest that the evening of old

age is afar off. Old age arrives; but yet the night of *death* is at a distance. While thou speakest, that night approaches, and thou art laid at rest in thy tomb.

Oh, the fallacy of all sublunary things; the changes that hourly pass before our eyes! Here is beauty and life to-day; deformity and death to-morrow. Here is infantine sweetness, and early promise of abundant good; but the spoiler Death rushes onward, and snatches the opening flower as a trophy of his victory. Can there be more cruel *changes* made by this despoiler?—Yes; he seizes upon the husband or the wife of the happiest union. He brings tears into the aged parent's eyes, upon the deprivation of his only remaining child; or he breaks the heart of the young mourner in twain, now left without one relative in the world!

My brethren, the consequences of these awful changes are daily before our eyes, and we profit not by them. The mourners go along; the hearse is conveyed in solemn pomp to deposit the dead body in its last earthly resting place; and youth, or virtue, are enshrined in the tomb—and yet, foolishly and fondly do we imagine that these things, these

changes can never affect ourselves! May our hearts be touched, and our understandings awakened, to know and to act more wisely!

But, I observed to you, that there was *another* change yet behind; in the brief discussion of which I shall close my discourse.

The *second* change comprehended in these words, according to a christian-like view of them, is—an HEREAFTER. When we have ceased to bear the image of the earthly, we shall then bear the image of the heavenly. When we have put off mortality, we are then to be clothed with immortality. But bear in mind, I beseech you, that immortality means *perpetuity*—a never-ending state of existence: no abatement: no cessation: countless millions of years are to roll on, and ten thousand times such a period is to succeed! My brethren, there is no meeting such a calculation. The human mind shrinks in dismay before it. We are lost in amazement or consternation. But *one* thing cannot fail to strike us; namely, that this hereafter, this immortality, comprehends *two different states* of existence; a state of happiness, and a state of misery. For the good are to sit down at the right hand of their Creator—as angels of light—as occu-

pied in the praise and adoration of their Maker: an occupation, in the exercise of which, no time, however immeasurable, will be considered dull or oppressive; but, on the contrary, increasing in felicity proportionably with its duration.

But let us now take a view of the *reverse* side of the picture. Let us for a few minutes only advert to a never-ending state of *misery* and *despair*: shut out of the society of the blessed: doomed to a perpetual endurance of anguish and of woe, and of heart-consuming wretchedness.

If a father, on taking leave of his son, for a long journey, proposes to him certain conditions, on the observance of which his return may not only be hastened, but attended with increased gratification; and this son be dutiful and affectionate towards his parent in the interim of absence—you may easily conceive what will be the joy of the father and child, when they meet again to embrace! But say, what is the nature of this absence, and of this meeting, compared with the absence caused by *death*, and the separation or re-union in the world which is to come? What is the real state of the case with us all? We have

one good, and gracious, and general Father.—"OUR FATHER WHICH IS IN HEAVEN:" wise, merciful, and omnipotent; but jealous and just: and equally prompt to punish and reward. This Almighty Being, or Spirit, is our *general Parent.* We exist by his means! and we die, and shall rise again, by the same wonderful Power. In his presence is the fulness of joy, and at his right hand are pleasures for evermore. Say then, on examining your hearts, would you renounce the society of such a parent in *paradise,* by doing every thing in your power to forfeit all claim to his notice upon *earth?* by being disobedient, rebellious children? by violating his sabbaths, and transgressing his commandments? Can you pretend to love this great, and good, and universal parent, and yet shew, by the tenor of your actions, that you have neither affection nor respect for him in your hearts? Pause a moment, ere you persevere in such resolutions. Remember, that a change is one day to come; and that there is neither cunning, nor device, nor repentance in the grave. When we rise again, at the latter day, this Parent and his Son together, who are to be "ALL IN ALL," will

be our JUDGE. He will condemn us to everlasting misery, if we have done evil; but if we have turned betimes from our evil ways, and done, "*that which is lawful and right; we shall save our souls alive.*"

SERMON XXXII.

I. Cor. xv. 22.

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. *

The resurrection of our Saviour from the dead is, at all seasons, a subject sufficiently interesting to excite the liveliest attention of a Christian; but at no season is the discussion of it rendered more appropriate than at that, wherein, as on *this very day*, we are assembled to commemorate his triumph over DEATH AND THE GRAVE.

The service of our church having described the circumstances attending his burial and resurrection, it should seem to be no unfit office in the pastor, to expatiate somewhat upon these circumstances: to solicit your attention, and to direct your hopes, to such important objects, connected with this sub-

* Easter Day, 1808.

ject, as may create a lively faith in the merits of Christ Jesus; that as, by the transgression of our first parents we die—by the atonement of our Saviour we shall all be made alive."

The Apostle, in the words of my text, in order to impress the Corinthians with proper notions of the comparative state of human nature, under the old and the Gospel dispensation, tells them that, according to the sin of Adam, they must all die; that is, if our Almighty Father were to judge us by the quantity of good and ill of which our characters are composed, he must necessarily, from the innate depravity of our dispositions, and the consequent preponderance of vice over virtue, pronounce a sentence of condemnation and woe. In Adam—from the corruption, and sinfulness, and disobedience of his nature—we have no hope whatever of salvation. On the prospect which *his* supposed merit holds forth, the eye rests upon nothing that is fruitful or exhilarating: all is gloom, and ruggedness, and repulsiveness.

Let me therefore here pause, and entreat you to consider—what would be your feelings, as sensible beings, if all your hopes terminated in such a narrow and fearful point of

view? Where would be the motive to honest exertion, and to exemplary conduct? How would the hours of toil be sweetened, and the energies of the mind directed to their right ends? And where would be the consolations of a death-bed, if, when the parent closed his eyes upon his children, he were to die impressed with a conviction that he had parted from them for ever?

Look at human life as you see it, in its complex and varied form, daily passing before your eyes. How many thousands are wearing out an apparently wretched existence, deprived of almost every domestic comfort? because *all* cannot be on the same eligible footing. There must be poverty, and beggary, and woe; as well as joy, and superfluity, and luxury. The inequality of the human state is wisely ordained by providence; without it, we should revert to chaos and misery —for equality of condition supposes, in a great measure, equality of mental feeling. If we all *thought* aright, we should probably *act* aright: and, if acting rightly, society would be necessarily, in all its branches and modifications, a state of perfect tranquillity and evenness of condition. But we all well know, my brethren, that it is not thus. We

see the guilty, and the innocent, poor man: we see the furious and the placable, the avaricious and the liberal, the relentless and the forgiving. We see them all equally hastening towards the grave; and if we could suppose the *same* end to await each—if we could suppose that he, who has *constantly* attended the worship of his Maker, should hereafter be on the same footing with him who has *never once* visited his holy temple, then our sensations would be most painful, and our hopes most discouraging indeed! Now, according to the law or old testament, it might have been thus. However principles of *justice* were instilled by the Mosaic dispensation, we know that "grace and truth," and everlasting life and happiness, came only by "Jesus Christ our Lord."

The cloud of sorrow, therefore, which such a prospective view would tend to raise, becomes instantly illumined, and indeed vanishes away; and the sunshine of Christianity irradiates the entire scene. "In Adam we all die; in Christ we are all made alive." "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The foregoing are impressive and most important words. They produce perhaps a

momentary exultation, and a serenity of expression in our countenance; but do they produce, what they *ought* to produce, and what the Apostle meant that they *should* produce — do they produce reformation of principles, and exemplariness of conduct? Do they cause us to shew forth the praise of our Redeemer in our lives as well as with our lips? Let me lay a supposed case before you.

A traveller, wearied and bewildered, presses along the road, uncertain of his way, and doubtful of the reception which he may experience when he reaches the object of his journey. Fainting, oppressed, and heart-broken, he is about sinking upon the earth—when a fellow-sojourner and stranger opportunely intervenes—supports his wearied limbs—animates his exhausted spirits—and conducts him, renovated by hope, to the abode whereto he had directed his steps. Here is, in truth, a picture of ourselves. We were such travellers under the OLD DISPENSATION. We were so oppressed, when we thought only of the transgressions of our first parents; —and thus doubting and distracted, we were about to sink into the earth, when we reflected upon that fearful chaos which the

chambers of the tomb held out to our imagination! At this critical juncture, comes down the "day-spring from on high" to visit us.* At this trying moment we are refreshed, as it were, with the dew of heaven; and our hearts are animated—when, from the chorus of angels to shepherds keeping watch over their flocks by night, we hear of the *birth* of a Redeemer—and from the voluntary and emphatic confession of the centurion, at his *crucifixion*, we find that he was "TRULY THE SON OF GOD!"

The journey of life now assumes a varied and a different aspect. Refreshing rivers flow where parched deserts once appeared. The graceful cedar and the fruitful vine crown the mountain, where before the thistle and the brier grew; and the thanksgiving often thousand thousand revived hearts, wafts to heaven a grateful and an acceptable incense! All this strikes a sensible and reflecting mind in a *general* point of view; and in a *particular* point of view, it should animate each of us so to regulate our thoughts and our actions, that we may live worthy of the manner, and of the *high price*, at which we have been redeemed.

* See Sermon VIII. page 106.

When the Apostle tells us that "in Christ all are made alive," he may be supposed to allude to a vital spirit of Christianity *here*, as well as to a blissful state *hereafter*. He who is alive to a proper feeling of Christianity, is alive to Christ in its strictest sense: and it may be fairly asked, whether such a life *here* be not among the surer tests of living with our Saviour *hereafter?* Mere animation after death is worse than non-entity, if we are to be alive only to everlasting misery with Satan.

My brethren, be not deceived: God is not mocked. We must shew our sense of the Gospel dispensation—of the resurrection of our Saviour from the dead—by leading a life conformably to Gospel precepts,—and not by supinely imagining that, from no virtuous exertion, no laudable effort to improve our time, and mend our hearts, we are to anticipate the blessings of Christ's resurrection from the dead. It is not in *such* a point of view that we are to consider the serious words of the text; nor is it with vain, frivolous, and heedless sensations, that we are to hail the anniversary of our Saviour's resurrection from the dead!

Let us each press home to our hearts the question—for what purpose the stupendous scheme of redemption was conceived, and executed by omniscient power? Can we suppose that God is pleased with frivolity, and listlessness, and indiscriminate dissipation, as a return for all the agonies, and all the indignities which his Son suffered, in order that we might be for ever happy in heaven? Do we properly repay the tortures of crucifixion, or the sublime triumph over death and the grave, by engaging in contemptible, and irrational, if not decidedly criminal, pursuits? Can a serious and sincere Christian hear the groans of his Redeemer, or sympathize with his victory over Satan—can he see, in imagination, the blood streaming from his pierced hands and feet, and hear his invocation to his father... "my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" and yet *act*, in such manner, as if his senses were bewildered, and his heart hardened to every solicitation, and every hope, which the Bible held out? Of all mockeries of our Maker—of all instances of complete depravity, this probably is among the most glaring and unforgiving. Be it your duty, your un-

varying object, to act, as if you had correcter notions of the character of Christ, and of the efficacy of his resurrection from the dead.

Consider, in conclusion, what and how numerous are the motives for such conduct on your part. If you live to Christ here, you shall live with him hereafter. Death hath then no dominion over you. Now, to live hereafter with our Redeemer, is to live in that state where every wish shall be anticipated, and every want shall be supplied; or rather, where want shall be known no more. To enable you to enjoy such happiness, the Redeemer led a painful and laborious life; the Son of God and man experienced such a fate, as oftentimes not to have where to recline his head. What is the return HE makes for all this ignoble treatment?—What recrimination, as among *ourselves* there would be, do we witness in *him?* Not one spark of irritability, of resentment, of even just indignation, possesses his bosom. He gives himself up, a sacrifice for our sins; he is nailed to the cross; he is pierced in the side; the platted crown of thorns is twisted in mockery round his brows; and we behold in him, thus bruised for our iniquities, our SAVIOUR AND OUR GOD!

The sepulchre, which contained him, bursts asunder. He has gone up on high; he has led captivity captive; and he has sat down, at the right hand of his father, to make intercession for our sins. Such are the leading objects, which, at this season of the year, should impress themselves upon our minds; and heaven grant that the impression made, may be productive of fruits meet for our repentance and salvation!

To-day is indeed a day of true Christian consolation; and as the captive exults at freedom from his dungeon, so should we, upon being rescued from that severer thraldom which sin and Satan had prepared for us. Perhaps, of life's ever-varying scene, to some of us, not many months, or even days or hours, remain. The summons for departure, when it shall please a gracious Providence to send it, will be equally decisive and irreversible. Are we prepared to receive this summons? Let us, every night and every morning, put this question to our hearts: and however some people may tell us that all this is good moralising, and excellent advice—do not let us relax from it on *that* account: for those who have never been in the habit of reflecting upon their latter end, are, not only of all men the

least calculated to receive the summons alluded to, but probably the most fearful and appalled at its approach. The bitter taunt, and the sceptical jeer, avail us not at the moment when our friends are watching the last convulsive gasp, and our relatives are weeping and praying for heaven to look down in its mercy, and to take us to itself!

It is *then* only, when we hope to rise from the grave, and to be at rest with our Saviour, that the vanity and nothingness of this life appear in their legitimate shapes. It is then only, as the world recedes from our view, that the dying Christian feels conscious of the efficacy of redemption; and that as "*in Adam he was dead, so in Christ he shall be made alive.*"

SERMON XXXIII.

II. KINGS, v. 13.

*And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather, then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?**

THE person, to whom these remarkable words were addressed, was no less a character than NAAMAN; who, the inspired historian tells us, was captain of the host of the king of Syria: moreover, that he was "a great man with his master, and honorable—because, by him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria. He was also a mighty man in valour; but he was a LEPER." That is, he was distinguished not less from his particular selection by the hand of Providence,

* June, 1811.

than by the splendor of his establishment, and his skill and courage in the field of battle. He was an honorable man also: just in his dealings with his inferiors, and irreproachable in his conduct towards his equals and superiors. Characters of this cast are now justly called *honorable*; for the term is applicable only to external evidences and testimonies of a fair, correct, and prudent course of life. It seems to have little to do with the more important and secret recesses of the human heart. A man may be very proud, very obstinate, very ambitious and bigotted (as Naaman, in truth, appears to have been) and yet be considered *honorable*, according to the foregoing definition of the word. But let us pursue the narrative of holy writ. "And the Syrians had gone out by companies, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid, and she waited on Naaman's wife." We shall presently see how this menial attendant, in a manner at once natural and interesting, became instrumental to the cure of Naaman's leprosy. "And she said unto her mistress, would God my Lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria: for he would recover him of his leprosy." This remark seems to have been overheard

by one of the attendants, who was anxious for the cure of his master. "And one went in, and told his Lord, saying, Thus and thus said the maid that is of the land of Israel." The king himself becomes interested in the communication, and exerts himself to the utmost, in order that so mighty and useful a commander as Naaman, may be restored to convalesence. "And the king of Syria said, go to, go, and I will send a letter unto the king of Israel. And Naaman himself departed, and took with him ten talents of silver, and six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment. And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying, now when this letter is come unto thee, behold I have therewith sent Naaman my servant, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy." The effect of this letter and embassy upon the mind of the king of Israel, was as violent as it was unexpected. He conceived that the king of Syria had an intention to mock and deride him: "And it came to pass, when the king of Israel had read the letter, that he rent his clothes, and said, am I a God to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? wherefore, consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh

quarrel against me!" Intelligence of the nature and effect of this mission, immediately reached the ears of Elisha. "And it was so, that when Elisha, the man of God, had heard that the king of Israel had rent his clothes, that he sent unto the king, saying, Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? let him come unto ME, and he shall know that there is a PROPHET IN ISRAEL." The result was, that Naaman conceived himself bound to appear in all the magnificence which had followed him from his own court; in order that every possible degree of pomp and plausibility might mark the operation of the cure. "So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha:"—his pride being too great to suffer him to alight and to enter beneath the prophet's roof; Elisha treats Naaman with the reserve which he merited. Not condescending to appear in person, but conscious of the healing mystery imparted to him by the interposition of the Deity, he sends a messenger unto him, saying, "Go and wash in Jordan seven times; and thy flesh shall come again unto thee, and thou shalt be clean." Now mark the result of this simple and positive injunction. Mark the foolish pride that renders human nature

in general so odious and so contemptible. "Naaman was wroth; and went away and said, behold I thought he will surely come out to me, and stand, and call upon the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper." He then pursues his ridiculous, and short-sighted mode of argument—"Are not *Abana* and *Pharpar*, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in *them* and be clean? So he burned, and went away in a rage." Mark now, my brethren, how, in this very paroxysm of infuriated wrath, the still, small, and persuasive voice of reason and of truth operates to the correction and cure of Naaman. "And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, my father"—(this title or address was, in oriental countries, considered as the most respectful and dutiful)—"my father," say the servants, "if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it?" The affirmative, on the part of Naaman, is not given by the sacred historian to this first proposition; but the words go on, "how much rather then, when he saith unto thee, wash, and be clean?"

This mild, persuasive, and irresistible mode

of argument, seems to have flashed instant conviction upon the mind of Naaman; for we are told that he went down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and the result was, his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean. For one minute further let us pursue the narrative; as it serves to place the character of Naaman in an amiable and TRULY HONORABLE point of view. "And he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and came and stood before him, and said, behold now I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel: now therefore, I pray thee, take a blessing of thy servant. And Elisha said, as the Lord liveth before whom I stand, I will receive none: and he urged him to take it, but he refused."

The illustration of the words of my text having necessarily, by calling forth so large a portion of the chapter from which they are taken, occupied a considerable portion of this discourse, it remains to devote nearly the whole of what ensues, to a few plain and pertinent observations arising from the example of Naaman, as it affects *ourselves*.

The case of this captain of the host of the

king of Syria, who was a great man with his master, is most strikingly illustrative of that of human nature in general. For, first, we are all afflicted with the LEPROSY of some SIN or another; some lust, some vice, some crooked and disgraceful passion, which besets, and may undo us. Pride was the failing of Naaman's character. He knew and felt the disease of leprosy. It exposed him to malicious observation, and it subjected him to positive inconvenience. Behold, then, this mighty and honorable man, with strong recommendatory letters from his sovereign; with a retinue, presents, and every thing to bespeak attention, and command respect from the king of Israel—going down to be cured of his malady; approaching the inspired physician with pomp and insolence; expecting some great and formal ceremony; some inversion perhaps of the ordinary laws of nature to take place as the forerunner of his convalescence. Observe now the opposite conduct of Elisha. Confident in the might of his Creator, and full of faith in the efficacy of the remedy pointed out to him; sending a messenger only to this proud patient to dip in Jordan seven times; not in the luxuriant and majestic streams of Abana and Pharpar, (as

Naaman had presumptuously imagined), but in that humbler stream, afterwards hallowed by the baptism of the SON OF GOD AND MAN. At first, the proud Syrian is indignant and wrathful. His servants approach, and whisper to him in the persuasive voice of reason—he listens—alights from his chariot—bathes in the healing stream, and comes out cleansed and purified as is the flesh of a little child.

In the second place, my brethren, let us see whether, as Naaman had, *we* have any remedies proposed, or indeed urged upon us to embrace, for the cure of our *own infirmities.*

How read we in the Scriptures? Is nothing therein prescribed for our cure, when we are slanderers, hypocrites, revengeful, hardened in sin? Has the incomparable sermon upon the Mount, preached by the divine preacher Jesus Christ our Lord, never, when young—or, in later years—been taken up for an attentive perusal and meditation? Have the great, leading scriptural doctrines, in which heaven and hell, eternity and time, are so strongly and awfully unfolded, *never* at any season formed a subject of our most earnest and anxious meditation? Can we approach our Heavenly Father, on the

bended knees of piety, and say, "Oh God! we are indeed miserable sinners—and all lepers in the pursuit of everlasting happiness, since thou hast *not* vouchsafed to afford any remedy, or direct us to those streams in which we may wash and be clean!" Where is the desperate mortal that is prompted to breathe such a prayer before the throne of mercy and grace? Alas! for his own comfort—for his own salvation—for the happiness of his surrounding relatives and friends, who will feel and weep for him—if he *can* approach his Redeemer in strains similar to the foregoing!

My brethren, the fact and the truth is, that we can make no such complaint, nor prefer such a prayer—unless we have pertinaciously shut our eyes against the light of truth, or deliberately chosen the vessel of poison, in preference to the medicine which is inscribed as containing the means of cure.

We are all, unquestionably, enabled to be cleansed from the sin that besets us, by having recourse to the healing influence of Gospel truths. And observe, I beseech you, that these truths, or remedies, are so plain and efficient, that it is impossible to plead ignorance of their comprehension. If the

heart will only go a little with the *understanding*, the result cannot be questioned. The leprosy of sin shall no more taint; and the consoling assurances of scriptural salvation shall wash out the scarlet dye of our imperfections.

But, as the third and last branch of this discourse—take heed that you slight not the advice given, or doubt of its efficacy when inforced. This is the most important consideration of the whole. We know that, like Naaman, we are all afflicted with leprosy; but metaphorically, and indeed justly speaking, with a leprosy, perhaps, of a more corrosive and deadly tendency. We also know that there are remedies for this woeful affliction, which are to be found in the Book of Light and of Life. Now the question is, do we have recourse to these medicines? In other words, do we read our Bibles? and not only read and know, but reflect and *act* upon such knowledge? Here is the great point upon which all our temporal and everlasting happiness turns. We may think otherwise—but the truth really is, as I have just stated it to you, and your own hearts and consciences must be your guides and judges respecting your innocence or guilt in this particular.

The scriptures say, boast not of your riches, of your rank, of your endowments, and of your purity. Put on the simplicity of children. Pray in secret; humbly, devoutly, and with a contrite heart. While you talk of wealth, and build your stores and granaries, in the same night your soul shall be required of you. Cast away pomp, and put on appropriate clothing, and give to the poor; or build your habitations where they may last, and not perish. The splendor of pedigree is no more, when some of your children drop into an untimely grave, and others are corrupted and undone. Earthly honors and festivities may command momentary admiration; but the interests of *another world* will soon shew you that they are only as bubbles in the sunbeam. Unlooked-for disaster dashes the cup of pleasure from the lip; and the funereal shroud is the evening clothing, where the morning was ushered in as the harbinger of bliss! Nothing is permanent, nothing consolatory, but the wisdom which leads us to hope for other habitations ... whose builder and maker is GOD.

The Scriptures shew you all this. They disguise nothing. They strip human nature of its artificial clothing, and place before it

the legitimate character which it ought to assume. Pride, hardness of heart, incredulity, and obstinacy; these were the failings of Naaman's character. He laid them aside—he was obedient—he washed in the healing waters of Jordan, and became cleansed as a little child. His mind also, as well as his body, received the benefit of adopting the wise counsel of Elisha. He is now the supplíant and not the commander; and a new train of ideas, and a new system of conduct, seem from that moment to have actuated him through life.

My brethren, we must imitate the example of Naaman, if we wish to be cured by the great physician of our souls. We must frankly and resolutely examine the causes, and think upon the probable consequences, of our sinful passions; and as frankly and resolutely put the means of cure into effect. We must not expect miracles to be performed for our conversion; or pomp and ceremony to accompany the application of the means of cure. No, we must hear and obey: not interrogate our Maker, or question or doubt his power of restoration; but listen reverently and patiently to the advice

we receive, and promptly and honestly put that advice into practice.

Nought else beneath the sun can save us. Human ingenuity may flatter our wishes, and elevate our hopes; but, before the piercing light of *Gospel truths*, it vanishes like the unsubstantial visions of the night. God only is great, and wise, and everlasting: his word, delivered by his own messengers, and more especially by his beloved Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is alone able to give rest to our souls. In him we live, and move, and have our being; through the merits of the same son we pray for "patience under our sufferings, and a happy issue out of all our afflictions."

SERMON XXXIV.

II. SAM. xix. 34, 35.

*And Barzillai said unto the king, How long have I to live, that I should go up with the king unto Jerusalem? I am this day fourscore years old: and can I discern between good and evil? can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink? can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women? wherefore then should thy servant be yet a burden unto my lord the king?**

THESE words were uttered by the wise and venerable BARZILLAI on the following occasion. King David, on the death of his son Absalom, set out on a journey towards Jerusalem, in which it was necessary for him to pass the river Jordan. While he lay at *Mahanaim*, himself and his suite were supplied

* February, 1809.

with provisions, and other accommodations, by the generosity of Barzillai; who is introduced to us as a very aged man, even fourscore years old, and also as a very great man: that is, as a character of considerable influence and power. David, whose disposition was always generous and sincere, felt sufficiently the extent of his obligation to Barzillai for his bounty, and entreated him to go up with him to Jerusalem, where he would endeavour to requite him for his munificence and hospitality. "And the king said unto Barzillai, come thou over with me, and I will feed thee with me in Jerusalem."

The old man was not to be seduced, by this splendid offer, from following what he justly conceived to be the proper line of his duty, and the more characteristic employment of OLD AGE. He declines the invitation in a manner at once dignified and impressive. "And Barzillai said unto the king, How long have I to live, that I should go up with the king to Jerusalem? I am this day fourscore years old, and can I discern between good and evil? can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink? can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women? wherefore then should thy ser-

vant be yet a burden unto my lord the king?" However, to shew his respect for the monarch, and his sense of the kindnesses intended him, he offers to accompany David a little way on the journey. "Thy servant," says he, "will go a little way over Jordan with the king: and why should the king recompense it with so great a reward?" He then more seriously addresses himself to his sovereign, offering the wisest and most substantial of all reasons for a non-compliance with his request: namely, his total inability to partake of the gratifications held out to him, and the imperious necessity of his conducting himself according to his age, and condition, and circumstances. He reminds the king that his grey hairs, and enfeebled frame, warn him of the quick approach of death, and that he would rather die in his *native*, than in a *foreign*, land. "Let thy servant," continues he, "let thy servant, I pray thee, turn back again, that I may die in mine own city, and be buried by the grave of my *father* and *mother*." He then recommends to him, as a person in every respect better fitted to be his attendant, *Chimham*; and begs of him to confer upon *him* all the

kindness which had been intended for himself.

The king, struck with this natural and affecting mode of argument, readily accedes to the proposal, and promises to take Chimham under his particular protection. "And the king answered, Chimham shall go over with me, and I will do to him that which shall seem good unto thee; and whatsoever thou shalt require of me, that will I do for thee." This prompt and generous reply soothes the anxious mind of Barzillai, and he prepares to follow in the monarch's train, and to go a little way with him, only beyond the river Jordan. "And all the people went over Jordan; and when the king was come over, the king kissed Barzillai, and blessed him: and he returned unto his own place." Barzillai, in fact, returned back again to devote the small remainder of his days to that society in which he had moved; to breathe his last breath in the presence of those who would watch over him with filial anxiety and tenderness; and to have his bones to lie at rest in the sepulchre of his fathers:—for, to a wise and good man, few things render a death-bed more serene, than

the assured conviction of being borne to the grave by willing hands, and wept by faithful hearts. King David and his suite moved forward towards Jerusalem: the venerable Barzillai and his attendants returned backwards to Mahanaim. And thus ends the narrative concerning these two illustrious characters, which gave rise to the impressive observation contained in the words of the text.

Before I submit those practical remarks, with reference to *yourselves*, arising out of the subject matter under discussion, permit me to hold up the picture of the aged *Barzillai*, as he acted towards his sovereign, to your closest attention, and warmest admiration. Here is a venerable old man, living in affluence and splendor; exercising an extensive but gentle sway; the favorite of the people and of the monarch; still preserving his character from corruption, and his mind from vanity and imbecility. Accustomed to courtly attentions, he suffers these to have no paramount influence, so as to exclude good sense and faithful admonition. He knows that these are, in a material degree, only *forms*, but *necessary* forms; and therefore he loses not the *substance* to the *shadow*. Accustomed from early manhood to the various

gratifications of the senses—to costly viands and sparkling cups—he is not to be tempted, as he *grows in years*, into an indiscreet indulgence of what, in his *youth* perhaps, he had never abused the enjoyment. Novelty here has no charm; and therefore when the monarch of Israel, from a wish of shewing the old man every civility and attention, invites him to the pleasures and gratifications of a *court*, Barzillai, warned by the pressure of age, replies, "can I taste what I eat or what I drink? Consider, O king! at my advanced period of life, of what comfort and satisfaction can the pleasures of your royal table be productive? It is in vain therefore that such considerations are held out to me."

David, who was himself excellently well skilled upon the harp, and seems to have been always passionately addicted to *music*, had probably, in his court, the most accomplished musicians in the whole land—and the pleasure arising from *that* source of entertainment is next brought forward, as an inducement for the aged Barzillai to venture to court. But with no better success than the former temptation: for the old man replies, "can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women?"—and then, as if wishing

to put a stop to all further solicitation, he entreats the king not to urge him any more, for that, in reality, if he were to accept his invitation, he should only prove a burden to him—"wherefore should then thy servant be yet a *burden* to my lord the king." Supposing however, that, as he had entertained his monarch at Mahanaim, or rather had supplied his whole retinue with necessary provisions, David would conceive himself to be under *obligations* to him, which it was incumbent on him to discharge, Barzillai very prudently points out his friend *Chimham* to the king's notice; and admits that any attentions shewn to *him*, he should consider in the light of an obligation conferred upon *himself*. On these terms, to which David readily and heartily concedes, they part, and take an affectionate farewell; the one to enjoy the splendors of a court—the other to prepare himself for the swiftly approaching, and awful moment of dissolution... when he is to sleep in the tomb, and be "gathered unto his fathers."

So complete, and so captivating a picture of a WISE OLD MAN, is no where represented unto us in the pages of heathenish antiquity. The pagan writers, whether in poetry or in prose, generally assigned common sense ob-

servations to their old men—such as might be expected from the experience of age. They made them *talk* well and much; but they did not so frequently make them *act* well. Their old men could instruct the young by sharp and caustic remarks; and youth is often chastised by them in a strong and manly tone of wisdom and worldly prudence. But there was seldom any thing *beyond* this; it was rather words than deeds; rather precept than practice. The same aged character which uttered the wholesome language of admonition in the morning, was, oftentimes, before evening, a victim to the most brutal gratifications; and it is an affected boast put into the mouth of old age by one of the most fascinating of ancient poets, that it is yet capable of enjoying the relish of inebriety and sensuality!

Far, far different from *such* a disgusting picture of old age, is the one presented to us by the sacred historian in the CHARACTER OF BARZILLAI. A sense of his real condition and circumstances, and a gentle resignation to await the blow which is to lay him at rest with his fathers, marks the prominent features of this wise and venerable old man. Neither the revelries of the banquet, nor the

lustre of a court; neither sumptuous fare, nor costly clothing; neither the voice of singing men or singing women—have any influence with Barzillai to divert him from the fixed and wise purpose of his soul. From a sense of respect to his sovereign, he acquiesces in a small part of his entreaty: he accompanies him beyond the river, but returns to die in peace in his native land.

My brethren, let such a character now occupy your more particular attention. It has already, I would fain hope, won upon your hearts. You have been disposed to admire and to reverence it. Let us see, as it is in your power so to do, whether you have imitated, or intend to imitate it to the best of your endeavours. This will form a sufficiently interesting topic for the remainder of this discourse.

We are wisely taught, from youth upwards, to reverence OLD AGE. And wherefore? because it has seen much, and generally struggled much with life. We respect a veteran in warlike campaigns, because we believe he has done his duty, and that his strength and his blood have been lavished in the service of his country. In the great campaign of *life*, a veteran who has done his

duty on similar principles, that is, who has loved justice, shewn mercy, and walked humbly with his God, is entitled to, and usually receives, a like portion of respect. There is an instinctive feeling in all this, which we can neither smother nor set aside. The feebleness of old age claims our assistance, and we give it; because, knowing that we ourselves at a future day may be afflicted with similar imbecility, we shall expect the same assistance from others. We sympathise therefore with the aged; and tenderness and respect irresistibly mingle themselves with this sympathy. Instead of bounding along the surface of creation, like the younger part of mankind, with hope, and rapture, and extacy, the aged and infirm seem to contemplate the volume of nature with a comparatively dim eye and an untouched heart; because, with *them* the season of youthful rapture is over: and they are thinking, with Barzillai, of returning back again to their own homes, and of being buried in the grave of their fathers and mothers.

Such are the circumstances, arising from purely *physical* considerations, which render the aged an object of tenderness and support. There are, however, *other* more important

causes which call forth a higher degree of esteem and respect. There are mental excellences, deeply and painfully acquired experience, unshaken honor, intrepid fortitude, undeviating integrity, unceasing parental solicitude, pure morality, and still purer religion—which shed a sacred lustre round the last lingering years of advanced mortality! An old man, thus taking his farewell of the world—thus retiring with Barzillai to the tomb of his ancestors—presents to our view one of the most interesting and instructive of human examples. And is not this the appropriate, shall I add, *general* characteristic of age? My brethren, it is surely the most *appropriate*, but whether it be the most *general* characteristic, look abroad in the world, and be yourselves the judge.

If affection, if respect, if gratitude, be worth an old man's obtaining—that affection, respect, and gratitude, *are* to be secured by imitating the EXAMPLE OF BARZILLAI. Worldly wisdom may suggest other things; worldly wisdom may urge us to keep up an interest, to excite a curiosity, and to awaken admiration—when such an interest cannot but be torpid, such a curiosity idle, and such an admiration artificial. We may solace our-

selves that much has been done by repeatedly failing efforts, but the better part of mankind will see what torture we are inflicting upon ourselves, and how harmless are all the shafts of ridicule, or strokes of invective, which we aim. These, however, are the venial errors of age. There are others which it becomes us strongly to censure and avoid.

In proportion to the respect acquired by *wisdom* accumulated with years, is the disgust excited by *folly* increased with years. The wise old man commands and obtains our admiration; the aged and foolish provoke and receive our contempt. But what is the folly here alluded to? It is of a varied and equally disgusting nature. There is, first, a restlessness to appear in scenes which are perfectly incompatible with the enjoyment of age: there is, secondly, the vanity of dress and of personal decoration; a petty spirit of rivalry and opposition; an air of haughtiness and disdain; a despotism of opinion, and a feverish jealousy which leaves no stratagem untried, and which embitters every moment of existence. All this *putting on of youth*, and harsh and indiscriminate condemnation of juvenile pursuits and amusements, is *yet* to be found in the world; in the circles wherein we

move; and by those, perhaps, who are thinking that they are only imitating the example of BARZILLAI!

Trace now the *effect* of these preposterous habits of old age. Where is many a professed *modern* Barzillai to be found? In nightly assemblies; at the festive board; at the table of gamesters; in inveigling the young, and corrupting the innocent: charmed with the voice of singing men and singing women—and affecting to thank God, not for the good use that he has made of the mercies vouchsafed unto him, by his protracted existence, but that he has probably sufficient stamina of constitution left for another year's *similar* enjoyments—for the commission of more fraud, more mischief, and more wickedness! And with these feelings and principles such an old man thinks he is sufficiently fortified to meet the approach of that dreadful messenger—which is to waft his departed spirit into the regions of another world! "Yet, O Lord God most holy, O Lord most mighty, O holy and most merciful Saviour, deliver us not into the bitter pains of eternal death!"... will be the pious ejaculation of a Christian soul on witnessing the close of such a career!

And what, in conclusion, my brethren, is to deliver us from this fearful end? What shall bring the aged head, like Barzillai's, with credit and comfort to the grave? Not surely by pursuing any of the forementioned schemes and modes of conduct; not by intemperate and indiscriminate gratifications; but by a life soberly and virtuously led; by principles calmly and rigidly maintained; by maxims grave, discreet, wise, and good; by a rule of life correct, amiable, and exemplary; by a faith in religion equally free from enthusiasm and lukewarmness; by gently upbraiding the indiscreet, and turning youth, with mildness but with firmness, from the ways of wickedness into the paths of peace; by a cheerful, prompt, and constant submission to the Almighty's will; by thankfulness in all seasons, whether of prosperity or adversity; by shunning the giddy noise and uproar of the vulgar throng; by withdrawing from scenes where nought *but* "the voice of singing men and singing women is heard;" and by returning, with the virtuous Barzillai, unto the peaceful circles of HOME; where every heart is ready to love, every hand lifted up to protect. Be this the delightful, the dignified retreat of OLD AGE!

Let then the moment of dissolution arrive! let the fearful messenger DEATH advance to lay this good old man, like Barzillai, in the grave by his father and mother! What has he to fear? His BIBLE has taught him the way to salvation; and in keeping God's holy law he has found an exceeding great reward, as well as delight. He has never uttered precepts to the young, but with a view of guarding them against sin; of shewing them the natural depravity of man's heart; and the superior, and indeed sole, efficacy of Christian redemption. Nor have his admonitions been mingled with severe sarcasm, or unseasonable ridicule. Gentleness and affection have tempered the words of wisdom, and parental fondness and foresight have marked every axiom which fell from his lips.

Thus consistent, thus benevolent, and thus resigned, he bends lowly but firmly to his fate. Earth hath passed away, and HEAVEN becomes his portion for ever!

SERMON XXXV.

ECCLESIASTES, xi. 9.

*Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth; and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.**

IN the preceding discourse, I took occasion, from describing the conduct of the aged BARZILLAI to King David, to draw the picture of a *wise and good old man;* and in holding it up to your notice and admiration, it was conceived that sufficient inducements had been brought forward to shew that it was in your power to imitate this excellent example, and thereby to lay the foundation of respect and reverence for your own memories.

The words of the text, as must be strik-

* March 5, 1809.

ingly obvious to you, are of quite a different complexion to those of the preceding discourse. Instead of an aged and infirm old man, pleading his imbecilities and incapacities to partake of the pleasures of a court, we have here the animated picture of a *young, healthful,* and *joyful* character; ready to partake of every gratification, and able to contribute to the gaiety and festivity of the circle in which he moves. Such juvenile ardor excites the *pity,* as well as admiration, of the wise author of the *book of Ecclesiastes;* a book, which, of all others of the Old Testament, abounds with some of the strongest, most judicious, and impressive sentiments of piety and morality: and which is earnestly recommended to your constant and serious perusal.

The sagacious author of this book of exhortation, or of preaching, hath, in the chapter from which the text is taken, as well as in the succeeding one, shewn a particular attention to the CHARACTER and conduct of YOUNG MEN. He speaks of youth, not with the rigid apathy of the Stoic, or the licentious commendation of the Epicurean; but with a mixed sentiment of admiration and pity. He rouses the young from enervating sloth and

voluptuousness. He admits that the years of youth are captivating: that the heart beats at pleasure's call: and that it is the season of promiscuous and unbounded delight. He sets all this before the eyes of youth: he says, "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth; and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes—But"—here he pauses a while—here he collects his strength in order to strike a weightier blow. Having freely allowed that young men are often irresistibly impelled by the strength of their passions, and the joys which dance before their eyes, to the commission of violent and riotous deeds; he thinks it necessary not to suffer the young pupil to depart with a supposed *commendation* of this his course of life: but, gravely and emphatically he adds—"know thou, that for all these things, *God will bring thee into judgment.*" That is, notwithstanding, O young man, thou fanciest thy amusements and thy avocations wise, and rational, and profitable; notwithstanding thou mayest say that youthful passions *are* to be gratified, and that a season so tender, pleasing, and joyous, *is* to be devoted to promiscuous pleasure—notwithstanding all

these things, in which thou mayest suppose that thou art *not* an *accountable* being: still, still I would have thee to know—still seriously reflect that—for *all these things* GOD WILL BRING THEE TO JUDGMENT.

Again; in the following verse of this, and the first verse of the succeeding chapter, the same incomparable author continues the discussion: "Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity. Remember now thy CREATOR in the days of thy youth; while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say I have no pleasure in them." That is, be virtuous, be pious, while there is strength and opportunity left thee; and postpone not to the uncertain period of *old age*, the practice of those excellences which thou hast *now* so favorable an opportunity to perform.

Having thus endeavored to explain the scope and spirit of the words of the text, I purpose, in the second place, drawing a few practical inferences from them: shewing that, if wise and good men have expressed an earnestness and sincerity to divert youth from the paths of vice into those "of pleasantness and peace," it is at least the duty of

every *sensible* and *good young man*, to lend an attentive ear to admonition which comes from such a quarter—however, in his future conduct, he may choose to walk "in the ways of his own heart, and in the sight of his own eyes."

The season of youth is, undoubtedly, the season of gladness. All the impulses of nature, which God Almighty hath ordained to animate us at this period, tend strongly to produce unbounded spirits, and promiscuous gratifications. We rejoice therefore in our youth: our heart cheers us in the days of our youth, and we walk in the ways of our heart, and in the sight of our eyes. And wherein, my brethren, you may say, consists the criminality of all this? How harsh, how unnatural, and how unjustifiable, seems to be any censure, which is cast upon the indulgence of those passions, which are planted in us by heaven, at this tender and pliant period?

A second reflection will, however, check the impetuosity of this reasoning, and blunt the supposed point of these interrogatories. Undoubtedly neither God nor man forbid the indulgence of the joyful emotions of youth: but the question here emphatically is, what ought to be the *cause* of this joy? The

source of this joy must be pure, and the indulgence of it must be temperate. Now is this always the case with youth?—and does it not seem to be both a wise and commendable part in an aged and experienced person to say,—"Pause a while: restrain the violence of your passion: look forward only a little way; and consider that you are not only an *accountable* human being—you are not only at one time to be brought to *judgment* by an all-powerful, and probably offended God—but the *effects* of that judgment may be tremendous and irreversible. Therefore, O young man!—oh fond and inconsiderate flutterer upon life's transient scene!—make haste to remove sorrow and anguish from thy heart, and the crime of sin from thy flesh; for be assured that, however ardent, and varied, and fascinating are thy pursuits, be assured that childhood and youth are VANITY. As an antidote to all this, remember thy CREATOR in the days of thy youth. Consider well that there is a great and good God, who called thee into existence, *not* for the purposes of indiscriminate *sensual enjoyments*, but for the governing of your appetites, for the improvement of your mind, and for the purifying of your heart. Fear,

and love, and bless such a God . . . for HE alone is your kindest parent and sincerest friend."

Such, my brethren, is the sober advice given to youth in the language of the text, and in the spirit of the sacred writings from which that text is taken. Let us now see how it is understood and profited by.

There is certainly enough, and perhaps more than enough, of that species of youthful *gladness* which, perhaps, was not *exactly* meant by the author of the text. We have now almost so entirely exploded the grave doctrines of our forefathers, that instead of a prescribed diffidence, and humble demeanor, in youth of both sexes, there seems to be too often an unusual agitation, if not absolute anxiety, among *parents* as well as youth, how soon all this natural diffidence and hesitation may be set aside: — how soon all these fetters to unrestrained indulgence of worldly delights are to be cast off; and unresponsible liberty of thought and of conduct to be granted without reserve.

Now those, who have travelled only some *little* way upon life's road, know how thorny, how crooked, and how wearisome it is. But it is in vain you urge these considerations

upon the young candidate for worldly rejoicing. To his eye, this road is strewn with roses: to his ear every sound is melody, and to his palate every taste is sweet. If all this premature earnestness to shine in life be not accompanied with vanity and arrogance, it may possibly be *endured* by the patient and forgiving: but look abroad, and observe how disgusting, if not mischievous, is the tendency of this system of worldly education! To see a young person alive to a sense of *honor* and of *shame;* guarded in his expressions, and still more so in his conduct; stung to the quick with vicious and loathsome discourse; prompt to hear the wise; slow to form an opinion, and still slower to pass judgment; silent, diffident, and only roused into action at the provoking language of folly and of sin—to see this—what is it, but to view one of the loveliest and most fascinating of all human pictures? What is it but to see a fellow-creature promising to be a glory to his Maker, and worthy of the DIVINE IMAGE in which he has been created!?

My brethren, is such a sight common in the world? Or rather, is not the *reverse* of this picture a little more common? To see a young person flippant, passionate, and ob-

stinate; quite inflated with vanity and pride; boasting merely of his parents' wealth and consequence, while he is doing all in his power to render both contemptible:—to see him eager to pursue what is dissipated, and vicious, and extravagant—prompt to deliver his opinions unsolicited, and not always the most choice of language in the utterance of that opinion:—to see all this, is, I fear, also sufficiently common; but it is not thereby the more to be commended. If the depraved customs of society countenance and encourage this, sure I am that it is not encouraged by much higher authorities: by the language of scripture—in the word of God, and of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. From this sacred fountain-head, a purer, a wiser, and a more awful doctrine is imparted: therein we are told to let our yea be yea, and our nay, nay—and to keep ourselves "unspotted from the world."*

The immediate and remote effects of this *premature putting on of age*, are sufficiently mischievous, and ought to be vigilantly counteracted. A young person is brought in contact with the old, not always to receive the

* See page 127.

benefit which age confers, but to pay dearly for a knowledge of the *wickedness* which it sometimes exhibits. It is an essential article in this strange creed of mixing betimes with the world, that those, born with high expectations and to great properties, should be too frequently found in the society of the cunning and the crafty; who, under the specious but generally adopted phrase of *fair play*, are to *rob* him of nearly half his patrimony. Thus is the door to every species of profaneness and disorder opened. And yet, see how, generation after generation, this absurd, preposterous, and ruinous line of conduct is persevered in! Although we know that youth is to be the season for *moulding the future character*—although we know how precious, how dear, how lovely is virtue, both in its individual and aggregate character—although we know that if men's consciences are depraved, all faith is at an end, and the pillars of civil society are shaken to their very base—though we know all this—though we are eager to profess our knowledge of it—what do we, in fact, do? Why, with the solemn warnings which, in an individual and national capacity, are daily passing before our eyes, we consider *not*, as CHRISTIANS, the *rising generation*. No parent, no monitor, can conscientiously say that he

does so consider his young charge, if he says to them, "Rejoice in the lust of thy heart, and in the pleasure of thy eyes, for God will NOT bring thee to judgment!' And would not, in truth, this admonition appear to be inforced by some, whose children seem as merely mechanical actors upon life's stage—to play the frivolous or the profligate part—because their pastors and masters have neglected the cultivation of the mind, and because, in consequence, their pupils seem to have perverted the natural and instinctive impulses of the heart?

If, however, the absurdities of youth lead not to the dreadful consequences before described, they may leave behind them the stamp of *folly* and *imbecility*. They may bring on a premature intellectual dotage. They may create artificial habits; and make us actors upon the stage of life to the very last scene of it!

There seems to be one most important and comprehensive consideration attached to this disciplining or training up of youth; and it is this;—What is to be the ultimate and awful end of every human being? Why are we created and sent into this world? To work out our salvation; and to meet an Almighty judge hereafter. Are these things, my bre-

thren, constantly and seriously impressed upon the minds of young people by their parents and masters? But they are *too* serious and solemn, and fearful for youth to comprehend and put into practice?—Why is this inference drawn? Are modesty, suavity of disposition and of conduct, frankness, forgiveness of injuries, and loving-kindness, obscure and complicated virtues? Will they produce bitter fruits? Are they productive of mental or bodily anguish? And yet more; are instructions to do our duty to God by prayer, and a sincere and urgent desire to be strengthened by his aid, and comforted by his mercies—are these things wholly incompatible for young people to know and put in practice? The notion of *hypocrisy* and *fanaticism* arising out of such a line of conduct, is equally absurd and unfounded. Believe me, there is nothing so painful to endure as *folly*, *vice*, and *irreligion*; because our consciences must tell us that these things are disgraceful and wicked—and, therefore, how can we, in the language of the Apostle, have confidence towards God Almighty, *to* please whom, is to be the invariable aim and end of human existence?

In the third and last place, let us consider

that, although youth is the season of joy, it is, the season of quick observation, and of enthusiastic perseverance in the particular object of its pursuit. Let this quickness of observation, and enthusiasm of perseverance be, therefore, directed to *legitimate ends*—not in constant and giddy circles of pleasure—not in flippant criticism on the foibles and venial weaknesses of human nature—not in heedless disregard of the humble and the virtuous—not in the indulgence of little sins, and hypocritical traits of conduct—not in doing that secretly, which openly dare not be avowed—not in trifling with time—in exhausting the spirits—in tearing to pieces the constitution—in ridiculing the rights of worship—in absconding from the temple of God, and in provoking the wrath of that Saviour who died for our Redemption—not surely by *such* traits of conduct will a YOUNG MAN "take heed unto his ways, wherewithal he may be cleansed;" but . . . by one diametrically the reverse—by walking humbly among his fellow-creatures, and confessing himself a *sinner* before his God.

Consider, with what high hopes and unceasing solicitude some young men are instructed. What care, what anxiety, what

expense attends their education. A generous parent begrudges nothing—he wills his son to *rejoice*, but he wishes the source of that joy to be a *pure* one. Wise teachers, and faithful friends, complete the superstructure of which such a parent hath laid the foundation. And what, my brethren, can present to your imaginations a more interesting picture than that of a parent, on his death-bed, bestowing his blessing upon the child whom he hath long and tenderly loved—upon ONE, who equally respected him when the accents of love could scarcely tremble from his infantine tongue, and when the confirmed experience of manhood had taught him the value of that affection—upon ONE, who never brought tears of despair into his eyes, or caused his heart to waste with sorrow—upon ONE, who has "rejoiced in his youth," but has tempered his joy with the influence of virtue and religion; who is equally free from moroseness and licentiousness; equally hostile to scepticism and cramped inquiry: and who, in his orisons before his Maker, instead of thanking God, like the Pharisee, for not being depraved as other men are—smites his breast, with the Publican, and beseeches his Maker to have mercy upon him a *sinner*!

Happy indeed would be the author of this discourse, if it should have a tendency to convert any young person, here present—who may have *hitherto* devoted his youth to folly and unrepentance—into the paths of piety, humility, gratitude, and thanksgiving; into a line of conduct equally divested of imbecility and meanness. Every young person, when he reflects that youth is the season of joy, should also consider that it is the season for acquiring that *knowledge*, and those *sound principles*, which are to be the ornament and comfort of *age*. DEATH hath claimed many a young and *promising* character; but here he is sent as a messenger from the Most High, to waft him into Abraham's bosom. The young and *profligate* also die, as quickly; but not with such assured conviction of blessedness hereafter. No: those who have only acted like the prodigal son in their debaucheries, without repentance, and claiming their Father's forgiveness, such cannot reasonably hope for the comfort of a Christian's death-bed. They may exclaim "Lord, Lord;" but have they "done the will of their Father which is in heaven?"

Most earnestly then, in conclusion, I entreat those who may be just launching upon

the wide and boisterous ocean of life, "to take heed unto their ways;" to rejoice in sincerity and truth; and never to banish from their recollection, that, for whatever they do, be it bad or be it good, GOD WILL BRING THEM TO JUDGMENT. If they have done *ill*, they know what is the lot appointed for the wicked in the book of life. If they have done *well*, they also know that, at the last day, when their Saviour shall come in his glorious majesty, to judge both the quick and the dead, they shall rise to the LIFE IMMORTAL!

SERMON XXXVI.

GAL. vi. 9.

*And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.**

THERE are few chapters, in the energetic epistles of St. Paul, which are more distinguished for benevolence of sentiment, than the one from which my text is taken. Almost every verse, of which this chapter is composed, affords subject for copious and useful illustration. The Apostle speaks to his Christian brethren and disciples with the authority of a master, but with the mildness of a parent. You cannot fail to have noticed one continued strain of the most anxious and affectionate solicitude, which pervades this chapter from its commencement to its close. But the limits of a discourse like the present,

* CHARITY SERMON, preached in the Chapel Royal, at Brighton, October 25th, 1812, for the benefit of the INFIRMARY at that place.

(wherein the very interesting *object* for which it hath been more *especially undertaken,* must necessarily form a material feature for your consideration) forbid any elaborate observations on my part. Yet, my brethren, I cannot perhaps raise the superstructure of those remarks, growing out of a discussion of the interesting topic before alluded to, better than by making the general spirit of PHILANTHROPY (with which this chapter so entirely and warmly breathes) the *foundation* of such reasoning.

The Apostle commences with an earnest entreaty that each of his brethren would consider his own liability to temptation, and therefore the more readily forgive the errors of his brethren. "If," says he, "a man be overtaken in a fault, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness: considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." He then goes on exhorting them to "bear one another's burdens—and so fulfil the law of Christ:" that is, (he may be supposed to observe), assist one another as much as lies in your power: have a fellow-feeling with your brethren: remember your own frailties: be merciful: do good: ease the burden, and lighten the load, of each other's afflictions: "and so," adds he empha-

tically, " FULFIL THE LAW OF CHRIST." You see then, my brethren, from this powerful exhortation—urged by one of the most sagacious and successful commentators upon holy writ—that the Law of Christ is *fulfilled* when we *bear one another's burdens;* when we pour oil into the wounds, and administer wine to the fainting spirits, of our Christian brethren; when the pangs of bodily pain are mitigated, and the wretchedness of mental affliction is removed.

The great Apostle then immediately subjoins:—" if a man think himself to be *something,* when he is *nothing,* he deceiveth himself." Observe, I beseech you, the strong good sense, and the no less powerful truth of this remark. If a man suppose himself to be beyond the reach of human casualties—if he imagine that disease is never to assail, nor misfortune to arrest him; and that infirmities and accidents, of one description or other, are never to impair his constitution, and break down his spirits—while he is necessarily, from the dispensation of all human events, subject to innumerable maladies and afflictions; and is therefore, as the Apostle strongly expresses it, *nothing*—if he imagine, or reason thus, then such a man does most grossly deceive

himself! For contemplate any situation, however exalted, and any condition, however hitherto uniformly prosperous. Can you, upon seriously questioning your hearts, say, that neither reverse nor disaster can possibly intrude where such splendor and prosperity prevail? The experience of every passing day too decidedly demonstrates the fallacy of such a conclusion. Approach the chamber of sickness — witness, if not the agonies of bodily pain, the heart-rending wretchedness of mental afflictions—the pangs arising from an ill-spent life—or, from a sudden, and perhaps unmerited, bankruptcy of fortune!—How stands human nature—which thinks itself to be *something*—how doth it stand on such a shock as this? Does it require no soothing sympathy: no ministering kindness: no effectual succour to keep it buoyant, as it were, upon the great stream of human existence?

But let us not lose sight of the more commanding strain of argument of the great Apostle of the Gentiles. The verses which intervene from the 3rd to the 9th, (of which latter verse the text is composed) may be thus summarily illustrated. "Let every man," says he, "*prove* his own work, and bear his

own burden:" that is, let him not merely *talk* about virtue and goodness, but *practise* them: not shrink from sustaining his own lot in life, but bear it with firmness. Nor does such self-endurance in the least prevent the exercise of humanity towards others. "Let him that is taught in the word, communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. Be not deceived, God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that also shall he reap." This latter* is an injunction, or truth, which every man will do well to engrave deeply upon his heart: to let it attend his incomings and outgoings; his risings up and lyings down; his intercourse with society, and his communion with his Maker. What we sow, that we shall reap. As we have lived here, so we shall live hereafter. A comfort this, to the poor in spirit, to the peace-maker, to the meek, and to the merciful:—a terror to the worthless and the profligate! "For he," continues the Apostle, "that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the *spirit*, shall of the spirit reap LIFE EVERLASTING." That is, vice and sin will assuredly bring forth everlasting *misery*: goodness and

* See the Discourse at page 375.

virtue, *happiness* of equal durability. We now come to the immediately following, and the most consoling, part of this strain of powerful argument. The words cannot be too often repeated. They have been already heard in the delivery of the text, and are these:—"*And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.*" The illustration of these words, connected as they have been here considered with the preceding verses, brings us to the second division of this discourse.

It is not surprising that St. Paul urges benevolence and beneficence among the most powerful duties, as well as the most substantial consolations, of a sincere Christian. His great Master, the founder of Christianity, Jesus Christ our Lord, was himself most eminently distinguished for goodness of heart—for *never* being "*wearied with well doing.*" He went about, as the Evangelists tell us, DOING GOOD. He was eyes unto the blind, and feet unto the lame. Hence the doctrines of his religion are so singularly distinguished from those of Pagan systems. In the latter, we meet with well-digested sentiments, clothed in polished language, and applying with sufficient force to the common purposes

of social life: but, to govern our thoughts with caution, to keep our hearts with all diligence, to love our neighbours as ourselves, and to evince this neighbourly affection by shewing kindness to all denominations of human beings—to bless them that persecute; to bless, and curse not; to lay up our treasures, with our hearts, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt—"*never to be weary with well-doing*"—were among the novel, but most beautiful and just, doctrines of CHRISTIANITY. To such admirable and attainable excellences, to these grand but practical truths, (without mentioning that of "the resurrection from the dead, and the life everlasting"), to such—the Heathen world were utterly strangers. And their polity partook of their philosophy. Splendid processions, eloquent eulogies, costly festivals, heroic achievements, and magnificent triumphs—all these objects captivated, for a time, the eyes and the hearts of the vulgar—of the great mass of society. But when the father reached his home—when he found disease crippling the exertions of labor, and misfortune darkening the ray of hope—or when he saw vice ripening apace in the infant bosoms of his family—what consolation, do you imagine,

those splendid objects and gratifications, just mentioned, could possibly afford to the suffering soul of such a parent?

However brilliant may be the medium through which the polity of the ancient heathen world is viewed; rely upon it, my brethren, that such substantial fruits as have sprung up from *sowing the seed of Christianity*—instruction for the ignorant and perverted, clothing for the poor and naked, comfort for the desolate and oppressed—never came within the scope or the spirit of heathen legislation: never marked their proud but perishable career. It was reserved for Christianity—for our blessed Saviour in the first instance, and for his disciples and Apostles in succession—to inculcate the doctrine of "peace, good-will, and well-doing." For the growth and diffusion of that happiness, resulting from these divine virtues, they laid down their lives, and were received into glory. And as long as the surviving race of human beings continue obedient and instructed; as long as one spark of such heavenly doctrine shall enlighten and animate our own bosoms, God grant that we may each, according to our ability and opportunity, *act up* to the spirit which such doctrine enjoins. Thus much, on an exami-

nation of the text in a *general* point of view. In a *particular* point of view, it behoves us to remark, first, that we are not to be weary in the cause of benevolence; and, secondly, that if we faint not, in due season we shall reap the fruits of our perseverance. This observation is made with a thorough knowledge of human nature and of human life.

The most active of benevolent characters are sometimes disposed to pause, and to doubt the ultimate efficacy of their exertions: because they find pride in some, obstinacy in others, prejudice in a third class, ignorance in a fourth, and ingratitude in a fifth and larger portion, of those who surround them. Hence, as the Apostle expresses it, they are apt "to faint;" to suffer their ardor to cool, and their confidence to be shaken. But, says he, let such never be dismayed, or depressed at heart: for "in *due* season they shall *reap*," if they will only *persevere*. So that you see, my brethren, beneficence, or love, or charity—however of divine origin; however superior to the speech of men and of angels; to gifts of prophecy, to understanding of all mysteries, and to all knowledge; compared with which, even faith and hope are secondary qualifications in the estimation of the Apos-

tle—and without which, all our acquirements and professions are as "sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal;"—you see, that even the practice of *this* transcendant virtue is sometimes productive, as the Apostle tells us, of *wearisomeness* or *faintness*. A few of the causes of such lassitude, arising from the conduct of others, have been already noticed. To these may be added, a cause arising within ourselves... I mean, a premature despondency, from too sanguine an expectation of immediate success: not considering that the Apostle has declared that the season of remuneration is *not immediate*; but that, in *due* time only, we shall reap.

Yet further: to counteract the influence of such causes—in others and in ourselves, as have been before noticed—St. Paul holds out a most powerful and soothing encouragement to persevere in well doing: it is, that, if we *only persevere*; if we are neither weary nor faint, and therefore relax not in our exertions, in DUE SEASON we shall reap. This season is a twofold one: in the *present life* we shall undoubtedly obtain the approbation of our own consciences, if not the respect of the wise and the good:—in the *life which is to come*, the happiness of heaven. This, my

brethren, is the harvest we shall reap by perseverance in well-doing; and for such an harvest, who would not endure the scoffs of the malevolent, and the privations arising from too excessive an indulgence of luxury and ease? Who would not stand firm against the current of clamor and ingratitude, and raise his triumphant head above prejudice and reproach?

Characters however there are, even in this present Christian world, who seem to fancy that true glory and solid happiness are only obtainable in a widely opposite career; who, in comparatively middling situations of life, delight to poison the principles, and blast the best comforts of their associates, by one uniform course of dissipation and sensual indulgence; without remorse for the past, without dread of the future!—who consider beneficence and self-gratification as synonymous terms; and who mix in the cup of human life every bitter ingredient, and "call it by the name of sweet!" In due season *such* characters will undoubtedly *reap;* but what will be the harvest of *their* fruition, I shall leave to your reflections to determine.

Again; we have characters in great and commanding situations, whose nod seems to

regulate the destinies, and to deal out the measure of happiness or of misery, to millions of fellow-creatures;* who imagine themselves to be influenced by motives of well-doing—of rendering nations happy—and of knocking off the fetters of despotism, only by fastening upon the subdued a more weighty and grievous burden of slavery and degradation—who speak loudly, by voice and by pen, of reformation and kindness, when they are gratified only by the conflagration of cities, and by the struggles of despair in the preservation of liberty and native rights! It was reserved for the *modern annals of the world* to witness such a MONSTROUS PROFANATION of all that is consistent with good faith, sound policy, and national justice: of all that is excellent in morality, and holy in religion. But let us wait for the "*due season*,"† and the fruit of the reward of such hypocrisy and violence. Let us stand still and see the salvation of the Lord: and let us never suffer our principles, whether of patriotism or of Christianity, for one moment to be shaken, in giving assent, however indirectly, to the supposed magnanimity of that conduct—which seems to be re-

* A. D. 1812. † That season has arrived; A. D. 1820.

gulated only by the frantic wish of subjugating the world!

Other and better objects should fix our attentions, and enchain our hearts, in the application of the heavenly doctrine contained in the words of the text. From these words we may learn, that all human efforts, unless influenced by the principles which such doctrine inculcates, must, in the end, be profitless and vain. Pleasure may entice, sensuality may captivate, wealth may gratify, and power may inforce submission; but, on this side the grave, there is nothing absolutely stable and excellent but BENEFICENCE—but perseverance in well-doing—in acts of courtesy, kindness, brotherly love and charity: for whether there be riches, they shall fail; whether there be rank, it shall cease; whether there be dissipation, it shall vanish away; GOODNESS only remains: beneficence, the emanation of the divine mind, only survives; uninjured in the course of time, and, in due season, productive of immortal fruits!

Thus then have we seen, first, from a consideration of the general spirit of Christianity contained in the verses preceding the text; and, secondly, from an examination of the same benevolent spirit pervading the text in

particular, that, by forgiveness of injuries, and bearing one another's burdens, we best *fulfil the law of Christ;* and shall, in the end, if we faint not in well doing, in due season reap the reward which God hath promised to the righteous.

I now come, as the third and latter branch of this discourse, to call your particular attention to the SUBJECT for which we have, in a great degree, this day been convened within the house of God. Having impressed your minds, as I would fain believe, with a conviction of the importance of, and immeasurable benefits resulting from, fixed and active principles of well-doing—it remains that I submit to your consideration the opportunity now afforded you of "*proving*" your own works:—of *practising* what you conscientiously *believe* to be good and just.

But before I briefly touch upon the nature of the INSTITUTION this day claiming your aid; before the melancholy picture of disease and wretchedness, which such an institution holds out to your contemplation, is in any way, however hastily, delineated, suffer me to beg of you to discard from your minds the idea that it is in *affluent*, or even *prosperous* circumstances—that sufficient applications have

been *already* made to you—and that this address must therefore be considered as a *mere appeal of course*, without being composed and delivered from a conviction of the absolute necessity of prompt and liberal aid! These are vain thoughts; and should not, for one moment occupy your generous minds. In regard to the present state of the institution, we are expressly told by the very respectable characters by whom its affairs are regulated, that "it will soon languish, unless strenuous efforts are made to revive its interests." The committee declare that they feel ashamed to think, that, "in a district where there is so much wealth, there should be such a dearth of benevolence." Now this, my brethren, is the very language held out in the *Third Annual Report:* and which must, to a *part* at least of my congregation, be attended with painful sensations upon reflection. There is *another part* of this respectable congregation, who may imagine themselves to be less interested in the maintenance and welfare of this institution; and to whom charitable applications, in behalf of *other* establishments, may have been already made. It is evident that I allude to *temporary inhabitants* of this place; or *Visitors*.

But *if* such *latter* class of those here assembled, by any mistaken apprehension, should conceive themselves less accountable to Almighty God for their conduct this day—either in withholding their aid, or parsimoniously, according to their means, supporting this admirable institution—it will be well for them to consider upon what premises or foundation such a conclusion is built. Can it arise from their own security from disease?—but this branch of the argument is really too artificial to persue. On the contrary, such of the present flock here assembled, who have been just alluded to, should, in an especial manner, consider, how they are enabled, by God's goodness, which hath "blessed their victuals with increase, and satisfied their children with bread:"—how they are enabled, by such heavenly bounty, to breathe the air of health, to renovate thereby their enfeebled bodies, and to rejoice in the vigor of convalescence, by an ample participation of all the comforts with which nature and art have *here* supplied them?! Let such therefore, *particularly*, endeavor to shew their gratitude to their Maker, for these blessings—by helping the poor and maimed, the weak and the afflicted, to a small portion only of such comforts... as have made their

own hearts to sing for joy! Let all, whether *constantly* or *occasionally* resident here, acknowledge how much more blessed it is to give than to receive: and inasmuch as they have felt, and been thankful for, the benefits of that *medical aid* which this institution administers to the poor—let *all* unite in one wish and one effort to give it effectual support—and in such proportion, strengthening the sinews, and increasing the happiness of the country.

In a time like this, benevolence should be neither lukewarm nor partial. We should all glow with one love, and strive with one effort, to soften the inevitable miseries of WAR, by making the labor of pity and kindness the labor of patriotism and gratitude. I do indeed, my brethren, most conscientiously believe, that institutions, like the one of which we are now speaking, are abundantly calculated to answer all the *best* ends of civilised society: that, in consequence of their flourishing condition, there will be less public decay, less leading into captivity, and less complaining in our streets; and therefore every generous heart must read, with emotions of concern, the opening of the *Third Annual Report* of the Dispensary just published; where-

in we learn that, although its growth is tender, having seen only its third anniversary, and although, in the language of this Report, "it has stretched out the hand of relief to not less than two thousand of our fellow-creatures; yet, its resources are by no means adequate to meet the exigencies of all the poor in so large a neighbourhood; and the support of the public has not kept pace with the increasing evidence of the immediate advantages of such an establishment."

My brethren, can this be the language of truth? And yet, who shall doubt it, from the acknowledged respectability of those characters by whom the establishment is conducted? What!—can we reconcile it to our consciences, to the precepts of the Apostle contained in the words of the text, and to the injunctions of Almighty God—made known in the language of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord—that *such* an institution, upheld by such simple means, and directed to such salutary objects, is likely soon to contract its scale of humane operations, if not, eventually, to forego all relief whatever—when, almost nightly, within this populous town, we regularly, if not cheerfully, afford our *pecuniary* contributions towards *objects*, which only inflame our pas-

sion for gain, and provoke the bitterness of feeling excited by repetition of disappointment?! Are all these trivial, unmanly, and absurd pursuits—to call them by no harsher name—zealously persevered in, perhaps for many weeks during the season, while we are indifferent to the cause of suffering humanity, and prefer the toys of children to the solid occupations of Christian brethren? When we offer up our evening prayer at the throne of mercy—and reflect, before hand, upon the transactions of the past day—how can we reconcile it to ourselves for having turned a cold eye upon an institution like this, which continues to assuage the pangs of disease, and to chase away the shadows of despair!—which gives the husband back again to his disconsolate wife, the parent to his famished children! Can it be, my brethren, that we really are so callous and obdurate?—so indifferent to our characters as Englishmen, and to our duties as Christians?. It cannot be: or, if it have heretofore existed, it will surely exist no longer: remembering that "*what we sow, that shall we also reap.*"

This strain of argument would be sufficiently painful to pursue. It has been adduced, from a settled conviction in my own mind,

that such conduct will not be much longer persevered in. If we must consume our time and our wealth, let us not be merely triflers. Let us balance such loss by something in the shape of *gain*. Let us have some strong anchor of safety, to keep ourselves from being wholly swept away in the tempests of human existence. Of late,* the stormy winds have risen, and the waves of the ocean have been lifted up. The voice of the Almighty has been heard in the hurricane. The mariners have been carried up to the heaven, and down again to the deep: their souls have melted away because of the trouble. But oh! my brethren, what is the shipwrecked condition of the mariner upon the ocean, compared with that of a human being who has lived from the cradle to the grave in one incessant round of turbulent occupations, ruinous amusements, and irreligious pursuits? upon whose soul no ray of grace has dawned? who has systematically "made shipwreck" of all virtue, and morality, and decorum—and whose conscience has never glowed with the delightful reflection of having visited the

* In the course of the preceding week there had been the severest storm at sea remembered in the memory of man, at such a season of the year.

sick, relieved the needy, or supported the institutions of his country in behalf of suffering humanity? What is the shipwrecked condition of the honest mariner at sea—who is toiling and bleeding, perhaps, in the service of his country—compared with that of a civilised human being, who lives desolate and unproductive of good, when he imagines himself to be social and humane—and who enjoys no fruit whatever, when he thinks that he is satiated with abundance!?

It is time however to close these observations. I had purposed delineating some of the features of this institution, in aid of which you are now addressed; but these can be readily ascertained, by any enquiring friend of humanity, in the perusal of the printed Report; and sufficient trespass may have been already made upon your time and attention. I conclude therefore, briefly, by earnestly exhorting you, whether *permanently* or *temporarily* established in the vicinity of this temple of worship, to be actuated by general, spirited, apostolical principles of beneficence:—to deduct only something from what is devoted to unnecessary expenses—whether in the costliness of dress, in the frequency of visits to public places, or in the usual gratifications of volup-

tuousness and ease. Spare therefore only something from such superfluous habits of expense; and call to mind how artificial are those objections which arise from the supposed *ability* of this institution to meet the various objects of wretchedness which are daily and hourly pressing upon it for relief. Discard such thoughts from your minds with the generous impulse of Christians: or let them weigh only as a feather in the balance. But let *other* considerations have their full and efficient weight; namely, that you have this day shewn yourselves to be true to your country, and to your religion, by having walked in the path wherein Christ and his disciples have enjoined you to walk; and that, if you only *persevere* in the same, and be *never wearied in well-doing*, you shall, in due season, partake of those fruits which the God of all mercy and truth hath abundantly laid up in sto refor you!

THE END.

Printed by J. M'Creery,
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BY THE

Author of the Foregoing Sermons.

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* Although Normandy and France be, in fact, one and the *same* Country, yet they are generally known under distinct appellations.

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SPECIMENS OF ART.

NORMANDY.

Vignette of the Cross, on entering the harbour of *Dieppe*. Vignette of the *Castle and Village of Arques*, in the neighbourhood of Dieppe. Groups of the common people; occu-

* Two views of Street Scenery: one of the *Old Gate-way*, the other of the *New*.

pations, &c. Vignette from the boulevards of *Rouen*. View of the market place, and of the South transept of the Cathedral of Rouen. View of the *Rue du Bac*. Basso relievo of a portion of the procession of Francis I. and Henry VIII. to the *Champ de Drap d'Or;* from the exterior of a contemporaneous building. Fac-similes from two ancient illuminated MSS. in the public Library. Picturesque view of Rouen from the road to *Havre*. Bird's-eye view of the town of *Caudebec*, the Seine in the distance. View of Montmorenci Castle at *Tankerville*. Scene on board the packet-boat from Havre to Honfleur. View of the Abbey Church at *Caen:* ancient houses at Caen: view of the Church of St. Pierre, and market-place at Caen: Ancient tapestry at *Bayeux:* Fac-simile of the Portrait of Harold. Vignette of the Tapestry Roll. Front Elevation of the Cathedral of *Coutances*. Picturesque View of the same Cathedral. Vignette of the ancient Castle at *Vire*. Street scenery at Vire: the public Library and Castle in the distance. View of the Castle at *Falaise*. Supposed head of William the Conqueror.

FRANCE.

Fac-similes from ancient illuminated MSS. in the Royal Library. Portrait of Charles the Bald, and of the Emperor Lotharius, from contemporaneous MSS. of the IXth century. Portrait of John, King of France, from an original contemporaneous drawing, of the size of life. Adoration of the Magi, from the Breviary of the Duke of Bedford, Regent of France. Portrait of Charles, Duke of Brittany, from a richly emblazoned MS. of Chivalry. Portrait of Louisa of Savoy, mother of Francis I. from a volume of "Hours" formerly in her own possession. Beautiful frontispiece of a MS. called *Les Echecs Amoureux*, of the end of the XVth century. Portrait of Ann of Brittany, wife of Louis the XIIth, from her own superb Prayer-book, or volume of "Hours"—considered to be the most precious MS. in the Royal Library. Portrait of

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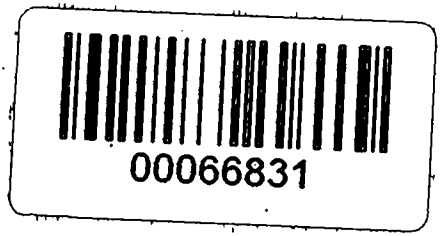
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